

DIVA

SEPTEMBER 2015 UK

OUT AT SCHOOL

Lesbian and bi
in the classroom

SANDI TOKSVIG

"Fight for women's equality!"

SECRET BISEXUALS

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woman in the
lesbian closet?

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THE FESTIVAL
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TALKING ABOUT

EXCLUSIVE

HEATHER PEACE

"LIP SERVICE RE-BOOT?
NO WAY!"

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LIKE A
BEA

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Danielle Cormack
creates a buzz

2 WIN A
NIGHT
STAY

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Christa Holka
christaholka.com

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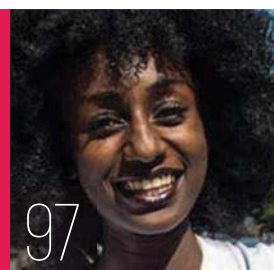
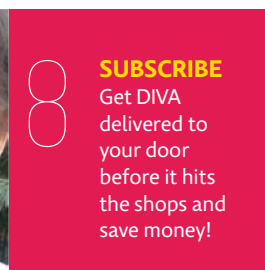
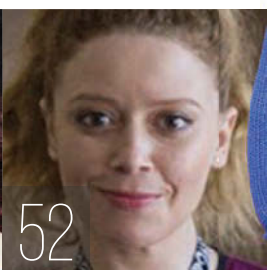
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EDITOR'S LETTER

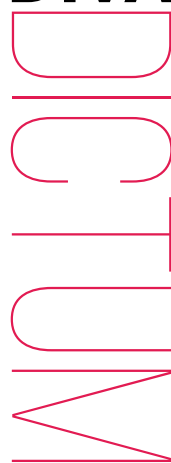


We asked, you told us and we listened. Yes, that's **Heather Peace on the cover**. One of our most popular cover stars took time out from her hectic schedule to talk babies, music and acting. Those of you **reading this digitally** are in for a treat with our video (soundtrack courtesy of Ms Peace) and a **behind-the-scenes peak at our fab cover shoot** (p62). We chatted to the Women's Equality Party co-founder **Sandi Toksvig** (p30), who told us why

she thinks we should join her party and get active, and we cornered Wentworth Prison's **Bea aka DIVA fan Danielle Cormack** (p50). We launched our first ever **DIVA Art Award at L Fest** (p54) and we look forward to seeing more work from our winner. We've got features on being **out at school** (p40) and what being gay or bi means on the **large and small screens** (p52, p44). Thembi Mutch writes on **China's growing lesbian scene** (p74) and Eline Yara Jeanne on life as a young **third culture lesbian expat** (p60). Finally, if you don't already subscribe to DIVA, why not get it delivered to your door before it hits the shops and save 25% while you're at it. Details on p8. If you want DIVA on the go, **pick up a digital subscription and save 35%**. We'll also give you access to exclusive bonus content – details on p94.

Jane Czynszelska
DIVAMAG.CO.UK

DIVA



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THE OCTOBER ISSUE OF DIVA IS ON SALE
FROM 17 SEPTEMBER 2015

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NEXT MONTH

OCTOBER ISSUE

on sale 17 September 2015



YouTube star Hannah Hart (left) on the crazy success of her My Drunk Kitchen show

Equality, but not for all: what next after the US Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage?

Alice Sanders wonders if it's possible to date someone who doesn't know her therapist

After Pride and the UKIP fiasco: why white LGBTs need to wise up to community racism

National Coming Out Day: will you be coming out on Monday 12 October?

Amy Dillwyn: the secret life of Wales' Victorian power lesbian and novelist

Jesse Toksvig-Stewart on her book that aims to make unconventional families feel included

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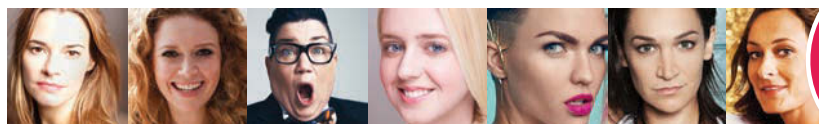
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Star Letter

MARY INSPIRES ME

I am a 23-year-old lesbian and live with my partner of five years. I got my DIVA subscription (last year's Christmas present) yesterday and have already read it through! I absolutely loved your interview with Mary Lambert and it inspired me to write to you for the first time. As someone who both suffers with a mental illness (depression) and whose partner does too (anxiety disorder), it was really inspirational to read about Mary's struggle and how she has used her musical talent and her way with words to help her overcome this. I also adore her body positivity. I try to embrace body positive values in my own life after so many years of hating myself. In October this year my partner and I are getting married and Mary Lambert's *She Keeps Me Warm* is our first dance. It's one of the most beautiful songs I know and neither of us could think of a more perfect song to dance to as Mrs and Mrs! I hope Mary can one day realise what a huge inspiration she has been to us and many people like us.

OLIVIA, Yorkshire

WIN!

STAR LETTER PRIZE

This quirky Heart Bowl and Ladle (£38) from Prezzybox.com is the perfect serving bowl for every occasion. Its warm red colour makes your food look homely and appealing and the stunning wooden ladle is ideal for plating up a portion of delicious grub! Dishwasher safe, it's easy to clean and even comes gift boxed. Check out Prezzybox.com for fun and funky gifts for every occasion! Prezzybox.com



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or use the old-fashioned method and drop us a line at

DIVA MAGAZINE

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United Kingdom

MORE TO GAY IBIZA

I was pleasantly surprised by the article *Ecolbiza* (August). It makes such a change to have something nice written about this beautiful island I call home rather than the bashing we get daily from some of the tabloids. Then disappointment when I read the Gay section of the article. Yes, we have a "gay quarter" in the cobbled streets of Dalt Villa. Sunrise bar does still exist, however DJ Monique left the island about five years ago. There are at least 10 other gay and lesbian venues in the same street as Sunrise and a lesbian bar called Las Libertinas just around the corner. Anfora is still a predominantly male venue and they allow women in only on certain nights. There is also an exclusively LGBT hotel (The Purple Hostel) in Sant Antoni.

The most amazing thing about Ibiza is that it is the utopia we have all been fighting for. There is no need for "gay" or "lesbian" venues because here we have true equality in our nightlife. However there are venues that are labeled gay and/or lesbian so we can hang out there if we want to.

MITCH, Ibiza

WE DON'T NEED THE SCENE

I too have noticed a decline in the gay scene over the years (*Your Shout*, August). However, I think that this change is due to a change in gay people. We no longer need to be ghettoised in order to "be ourselves".

Large cities like London still have thriving scenes because they have access to a population that can support venues that can reflect our changing tastes; for example smart restaurants.

Cities like my own in Sheffield however, find even mainstream pubs, clubs and restaurants competing to survive.

My partner and I mix within our local community, attending little beer festivals, summer fetes and going for meals and drinks. We are affectionate in public (but no more than I would expect any couple to be)! Most know that we are gay and everyone accepts us and treats us equally.

Perhaps it is a good thing that the popularity of "scene" venues is declining because it shows that we can now choose to go to places based on the music, ale or food we like; rather than based on our sexuality. People should mix based on shared values and interests and those that are like-minded may be from a range of cultures and backgrounds; this can only enrich our lives. Gay people no longer need to hide.

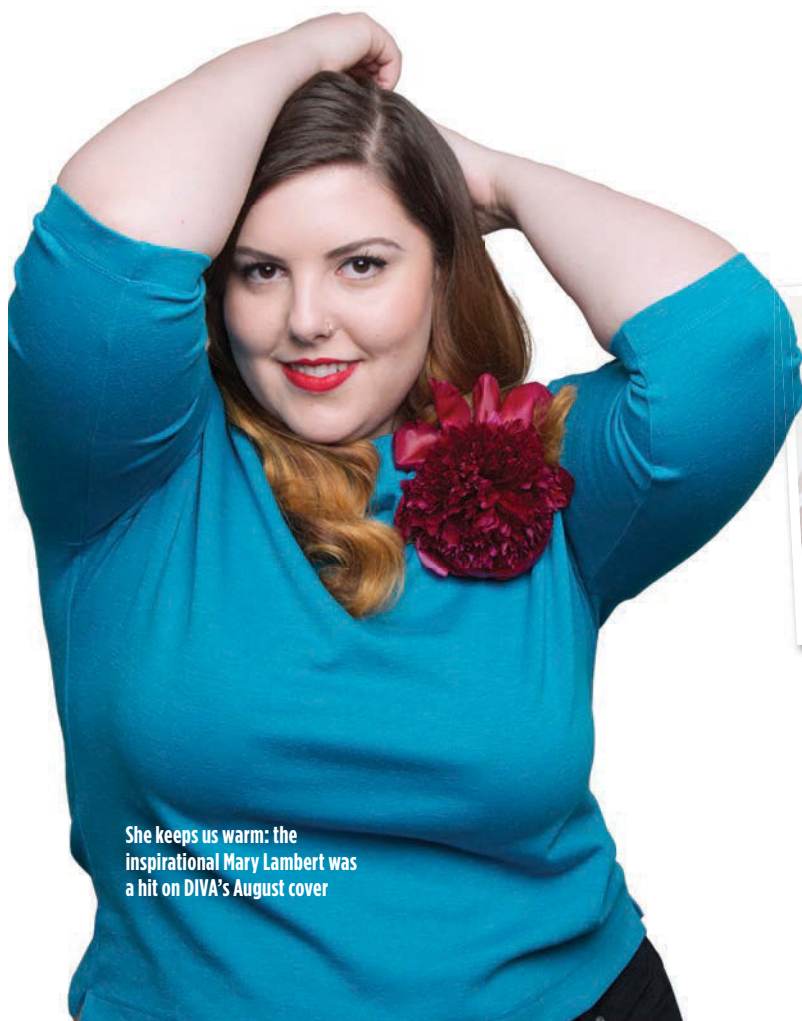
STEPH, Sheffield

LEARNER LESBIAN

This summer our 16-year-old daughter came out to us. After all the hugs and reassurances that this makes no difference and that we couldn't be prouder of her, I realised that I needed to know more and to be able to access info for questions I may not know the answers to. DIVA magazine has been wonderful! I buy it for her every month; she really likes it and so do I. I've always talked about strong role models and feminism and your magazine has really good references to both and to LGBTI culture, which I too am enjoying learning more about. I think that when she goes to university in two years she'll be more prepared for what's out there.

BETH, Barlow

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She keeps us warm: the inspirational Mary Lambert was a hit on DIVA's August cover



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@JooliaBlackwell

LOVE the diversity of @DIVAmagazine cover women recently! Can't wait to read this!! #bodypositive

@Ffyncwraig

Talking body positive with @marylambertsing on the cover and inside @DIVAmagazine #SexyLady

@How_Upsetting

I'm told DIVA is far from perfect but srsly, can you imagine any of male gay mags having a cover remotely like this?

@StephyBecks

Even though I'm 100% gay, the bisexual articles in @DIVAmagazine are my favourites. We definitely need to do more to tackle biphobia. #NOH8

@laurenwont

I may or may not have just subscribed to @DIVAmagazine because I feel like my lesbian level is dwindling. #SendHelp

#SendLesbianHelp

@FijayM

Took @DIVAmagazine to work. Str8 boys read the articles. Str8 girls thought about changing teams!! Definitely something for everyone.

@Kitanda962

bought my first digital copy, couldn't find it at my usual place this month :(love the embedded videos! #music #dogs #love

@Chinalreland

I bought a copy of @DIVAmagazine in Canada today!

@mari_ropstad

@SusanCalman I loved your column in this month's @DIVAmagazine, really made me smile. I love a laminated holiday itinerary!!

@paigelouisec

Look what I got! @DIVAmagazine so happy to have subscribed instead of buying individually! Love it! :D

Pleased to meet you!



Every issue, we invite one of our readers to tell us about her relationship with DIVA.



NAME & AGE:

KEZIA BARR, 23

FROM:

CORNWALL

OCCUPATION:

MUSICIAN

IDENTITY:

BISEXUAL

WHAT MADE YOU START READING DIVA?

I was looking for another magazine and spotted it. It was the only copy there, hidden at the back. I considered that maybe it had been ordered in for someone else... but I took it anyway (mwahaha) and now I'm a subscriber.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A READER?

About a year.

PRINT OR DIGITAL?

Currently print although I'd definitely like to see some of the alternative covers and other secret stuff you've got hidden away in that digital wonderland.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT DIVA?

I love the music reviews. It's been vital in discovering some great female artists in the past year. I'm also a big fan of Sarah Westwood. She makes me die laughing.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF?

Drag!! Also, I'd love to read some more about relationships between lesbians and bisexuals because I know from experience that it almost always throws up a lot of issues.

WHO ELSE READS YOUR COPY?

Well usually my housemate but I'm moving into a flat by myself next week so... maybe my mum will flick through when she comes for a cuppa.

WANT TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

Send a photo and your answers to the questions above to letters@divamag.co.uk

WHO WOULD YOU PUT ON THE COVER OF DIVA AND WHY?

Cara Delevigne. Because that face. Jennifer Beals because I miss Bette Porter!

Lesbians have had ENOUGH!

**This is what you've told
us about FREE lesbian
online dating ..**

"Free means 'Plenty of Fakes'"

**"I am happy to pay to meet women
serious about meeting other women"**

**"I am happy to pay to meet genuine lesbians
who are also looking for love"**

**"I WANT A QUALITY SITE
WITH QUALITY WOMEN"**

**"I am happy to pay not to see
all the same women I see on
every free dating site"**

**"I am happy to pay to know
the site is being monitored"**



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- Yes you will meet genuine lesbians looking for love
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- Yes we will monitor the site and check all profiles and photos

Pink Sofa is changing lives



We had 120 people to our wedding and it was beautiful. We have been very happily together for five years with four kids, a dog, cat and fish. Thank you Pink Sofa. You literally changed all of our lives.

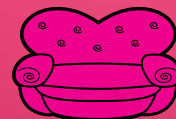
Kerrie and Sandy



I met my partner Annie on the Pink Sofa. Since then we have moved in together, started our own business and we got married in New York. It was the best day of our lives. We can't believe our luck in finding the perfect partner on Pink Sofa.

Kylee and Annie

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Mixing it up



1994. My cousin and I are at Grandma's flat in Stockwell. It is someone's birthday. As in all families, the

children are being encouraged to kiss each other, hold hands and dance together, so the adults can coo at our imagined heterosexuality. Because we are six-year-old girls, we are dressed in batty-riders, sandals, little crop tops, and everyone is saying that we should dance. We are working-class Jamaican kids and we are drunk on cherryade, so we start to wind our hips, like adults do. Everyone cheers.

This is before "twerking" had entered the popular vocabulary; when "the bogle" and "the butterfly" were current. The notion of a hypersexualised girlhood had not made it to south London. Me and my cousin bought "cigarettes" in the form of hard white candy sticks and smoked them like weary strippers to the hilarity of everyone around. We were given small sips of rum and quoted R Kelly: I don't see nothing wrong, with a little bump and grind...

I could write this article and lament the fact that I, queer, was introduced to myself as a woman in this way and that it was a cultural norm for two tiny kids to imitate some intense aspects of adult sexuality. The other option is to zoom into what was really going on. Cut to

Notting Hill Carnival, where I am on my dad's shoulders. The energy is unreal; the sound system is deafening. The bass is so intense it's hard to know which thuds are your heartbeat and which belong to the music. It's a hot blue August and people are acting out the most incredible, upside-down parodies of life. Men move like mermaids. People grind in crazed geometries. Acrobatics by the jerk chicken, gymnastics near the rum punch. Everyone gets low and moves from the hips, the thighs, the gut. Women dance with each other, their legs at solid right angles, staring hard at each other's bodies.

That was the gusto we kids were being encouraged to replicate. The Notting Hill Carnival was started in Britain to fend off white fascists; Kelso Cochrane, an Antiguan, was murdered in the street, and close to the site of the murder it was decided that a display in which everyday roles are subverted and mocked would be the best way forward. From the beginning, there has been resistance. An insulting police presence has been fought against, and people have taken action to quell the violence that marred previous parades. But more than that, the point of a carnival has persisted: it continues to turn things on their heads – to take everything banal, painful, frightening, oppressive and inane, and exorcise it with colour. What happens at a carnival is often an expression of what *cannot* or *does not*

JAY BERNARD
EXPLORES
THE TRUE
MEANING OF
CARNIVAL

Once upon
a time,
a black
woman
dancing
against a
white man
in uniform
was a
radical act

happen in everyday life.

I often think this is why photos of the police at Carnival are so popular. The tension caused by the boys in blue is notorious, but once upon a time, a black woman dancing against a white man in uniform was a radical act. I like to imagine the moment it first happened – when someone decided that instead of maintaining hostilities, she would step out and try to break them down. The more outrageous and intense the dance, the harder it is to keep a straight face. And sure enough, that first woman and that first police officer must have laughed at the barriers that divided them. That kind of thing comes from the gut. It's there in the dance, in the shaking hips, in spaces where turning social norms on their heads is not just a spectacle, but a means of defence.

When I see little kids dressed the same way I was, dancing the way I did, I understand better what was going on. A black woman in full control of her body is always portrayed as hypersexual and exploited, enviable and ridiculous, glittery beacon of light and harbinger of doom. It's a situation worthy of an absurdist comedy. My family knew that: it was a living room full of people who got their kids to imitate their complex adult lives, so they could laugh at how ridiculous it was. **D**

Notting Hill Carnival takes place in London 29-31 August. thelondonnottinghillcarnival.com



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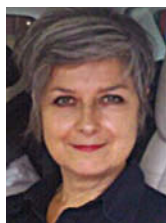
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The politics of Pride

ENOUGH CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP, SAYS NICOLA FIELD. IT'S TIME FOR A PEOPLE'S PRIDE



Something important happened at Pride In London this year.

Decades of creeping corporate takeover and the yearly

spectacle of pump-primed profiteering had all but stifled principled campaigning for LGBT rights. The disenchanted stopped attending the march; others persisted, frustrated by the lack of political focus.

But on 27 June, a seismic change took place. Thousands of trade unionists, campaigners and students converged at the junction of Baker and Blandford streets to create a formidable Pride Solidarity Contingent opposed to oppression, exploitation, privatisation and austerity. Some 50 banners carried by ex-miners, disability activists, teachers, train drivers, nurses and council workers mingled with magnificent placards, sponsored by our regional TUC, which proclaimed: LGBT RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS; LGBT PEOPLE NEED DECENT HOUSING: CAP RENTS NOT BENEFITS; LGBT PEOPLE NEED OUR NHS: NO CUTS.

Deafening cheers greeted us. It was thrilling. But how did this come about?

Anyone who's seen the hit film *Pride* knows that 30 years ago, South Wales miners led the march, returning the solidarity they received

during their year-long strike against Thatcher's pit closures. I was there as a member of Lesbians And Gay Support The Miners (LGSM). We were determined that Pride 1985 – which was organised by political and community activists – would be based on solidarity: "gay rights" were civil liberties to be supported by all.

As the film's fans will know, NUM backing ensured that the TUC and the Labour Party adopted LGBT rights, kickstarting the journey towards greater legal equality. Back then, employers could sack people because of their sexuality. Those who worked with children had to stay in the closet, the age of consent for gay men was 21, marriage was out of the question and LGBT people were routinely evicted from council homes when partners died. Thanks to a liberation movement fighting tooth and nail from the streets up over three generations, such rights have now been won in the UK.

LGSM re-formed last year in response to the political enthusiasm that the film ignited, especially amongst young people. We spoke at meetings, carried our banner on demonstrations and reproduced our "Pits and Perverts" t-shirts to fundraise for causes like the London Living Wage Campaign and the victims of the Soma mining disaster in Turkey. We made friends everywhere we went.

The Pride In London (PIL) Board,

despite its dependence on sponsors with dubious ethics like Barclays, Citibank and Starbucks, invited us to lead the parade with miners' banners, and a marching band and choir from South Wales. But we never set out to be a historical re-enactment society. We wanted to march with our supporters. PIL told us to limit our contingent to 200. We begged to bring everyone with us. But PIL, whose chair is Downing Street's former head of political broadcasting, said "No" and we got moved back to Block C. A cry of outrage from many ensued, but LGSM went all out to make Block C the new Head of Parade. And I think we succeeded. One proud moment was when former MP Sian James and Anne Scargill, Women Against Pit Closures founder, joined forces with sixth-formers from Pontefract to sing Solidarity Forever alongside strikers fighting privatisation at the National Gallery!

Our community faces a challenge. What should Pride look like in 2016? I believe we need to fight now for a truly accountable "People's Pride" which stands up for all LGBT people, regardless of economic or refugee status, nationality, age or dis/ability. We must reject corporate power and demand an end to austerity so all can live without fear of homelessness, benefit sanctions or deportation. Cameron may have introduced equal marriage but, under a cosh of cuts, this is pinkwashing. And laws are reversible if bigots like UKIP get into power. We need proper jobs, a fully-funded health service and social care which keeps everyone safe. We need everything Thatcher hated and everything Cameron is trying to destroy.

My most precious memory from Pride In London 2015 is this: a bunch of glittered, face-painted school students from south London – I had no idea what their sexualities were; it was what they shouted that inspired me: L! G! B! T! FIGHT AGAINST AUSTERITY! L! G! S! M! FIGHT THE TORY SCUM AGAIN!

Let's do it. **D**

Nicola Field is an original member of the groups Lesbians And Gays Support The Miners and Lesbians Against Pit Closures. She has written extensively on LGBT and other political issues and is currently working on a book to be published next year by PM Press, on LGBT liberation, pinkwashing and the politics of class.

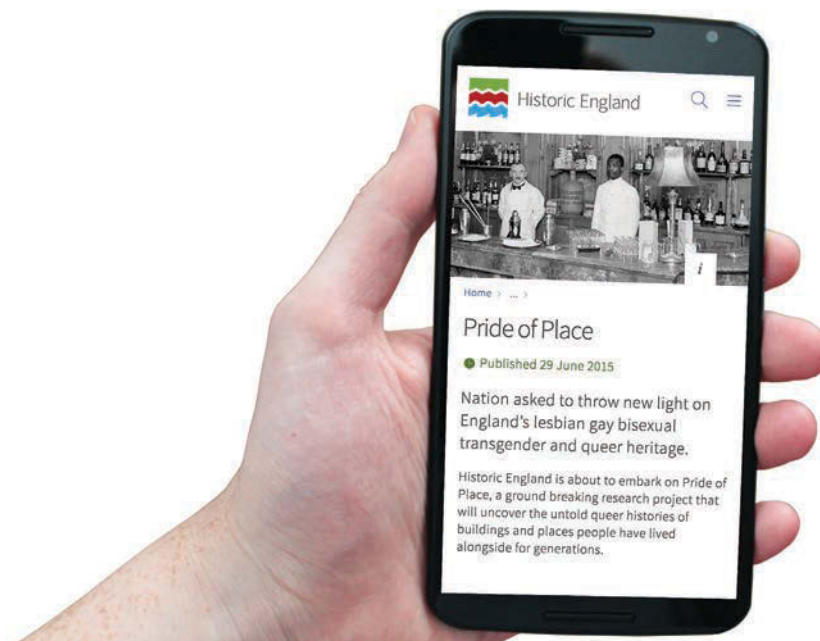
Our community faces a challenge. What should Pride look like in 2016?



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Pride of place

A PROJECT MAPPING LGBT HISTORY GETS CHARLOTTE COOPER THINKING



I'm fascinated by how someone's relationship to the state changes over the course of a lifetime. Call me old-fashioned

but I still think it's a bit weird that queers are recognised as state-sanctioned citizens, most obviously through marriage. I never wanted or expected that for myself and I remain ambivalent about it.

But I've been thinking about this stuff as a result of Historic England's Pride Of Place: LGBTQ Heritage Project, which recently launched. This is an attempt to create a map of LGBT spaces in the UK, many of which have disappeared or are under threat. There's a website where you can sign up and add your own historic queer spaces to an online map. There are so many of them, we are everywhere and have been for a long time. It's a valuable project though I'm a bit disorientated because in the 1980s English Heritage, the organisation from which Historic England has been created, used to be the gang who got the police to harass me, my brother and several thousand other weirdos because they didn't want us to get anywhere near Stonehenge to celebrate the Solstice unless they could sell us a ticket. Whose side am I on now?

I don't live anywhere special but I've lived here for a long time and I've seen

some changes. There used to be three mixed neighbourhood gay bars within walking distance of my home. I met my girlfriend in one of them, we had our first date in another, now there are none and we sit at home watching Star Trek by ourselves. I see queers on the streets around here every day but there are no local services except for a youth group that is threatened with closure.

Queer public spaces are being destroyed at an alarming rate, not only in the neighbourhoods but also in the capital. The Black Cap in Camden and the Royal Vauxhall Tavern are both fighting for survival against developers at the moment. The struggle to keep them queer is being led by squatters and community groups with few resources other than their outrage at social cleansing. As far as I know, government-funded heritage organisations have steered clear of openly supporting these struggles, possibly because these developers are precisely the sort of people that this particular government wants to encourage in the name of free enterprise and a market economy.

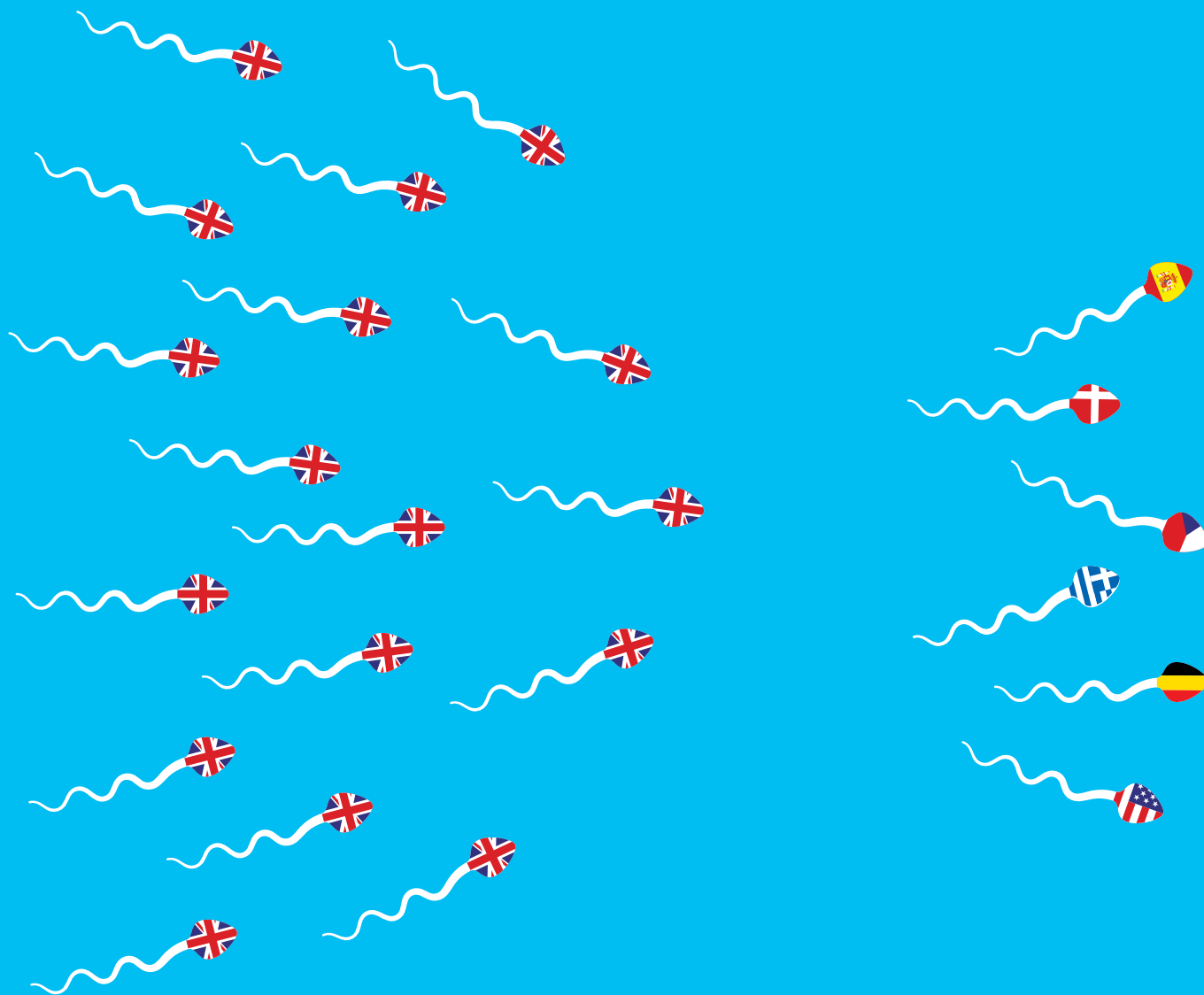
Homos make a very nice online heritage project but we're less acceptable when we're getting smashed and fucking in the toilets. But these are our sacred community rituals and part of a wide repertoire of historic cultural traditions that are being lost along with the spaces in which we perform them.

I recall the mines that became heritage centres and the miners who lost their work, communities and identities after they were decimated by the Thatcher government. I fear that real live queer people and places are similarly losing our materiality, vitality, aliveness and that we are fast becoming sanitised and sad memory projects instead. I mean, really, can you look at Historic England's Pride Of Place map without crying?

Oh well, these are tough times and we should just get used to it. If you can't beat them, join them. Let it be known that I'm totally available for nicely-paid consultancy to any of the organisations bidding for the right to produce Britain's first family-friendly LGBT Theme Park. I think it should be called Lezbo Land and I've got a lovely load of actor-interpreters ready to spill your pint, adorn you with rainbow-coloured tat and give you a minor sexually transmitted infection. At Lezbo Land we pipe in natural-seeming smells and sounds so that you can experience the authentic sensory delights of a favourite butt plug, a lesbian hairdo caked in product and a sticky pub carpet. Simply slip on these glittered pink virtual reality specs and touchy-feely cyber gloves and you're ready to go. Roll up! Roll up! Come one and come all! **D**

historicengland.org.uk
charlotte@divamag.co.uk

There used to be three gay bars within walking distance of my home. Now there are none



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EMMA KENNEDY'S NEW TV SERIES WILL HAVE YOU IN STITCHES

When we called Emma Kennedy to talk about her new TV series, *The Kennedys*, she made us laugh so much a little bit of wee almost came out. Thankfully, we managed to compose ourselves long enough to find out the basics.

Adapted from her book, *The Tent, The Bucket And Me*, and based on a council estate in Stevenage in the 70s, the series is described as a "love letter to social housing" and is predominantly about Emma's "eccentric" mum Brenda, played by Katherine Parkinson (*The IT Crowd*, *Humans*).

Full of crazy and wonderfully bizarre anecdotes, every single episode – believe it or not – is based on something that actually happened. Including the one where Emma's mum books her driving test for three days' time, despite never having a lesson in her life. "She had an argument with the test instructor because he asked her to do a hill start," laughs Emma. "She literally turned to him and said, 'Don't be ridiculous. How can I start a car on a hill?'"

What did the real-life Brenda make of it? "We filmed the pilot three weeks after my mother died, very sadly," says Emma. "But I sat with her on her deathbed and read her all the scripts. She stopped me at one point, put her hand on my forearm, and she went, 'You're going to have to change her name, your father still sees her in Sainsburys'."

Was Emma, who's done a fair bit of acting herself, not tempted to sneak in a cameo? "I have a golden rule about this," she says. "I'll only put myself in something I've written if no one else will be better doing it than me. It is far more important to me when I've written something that it is the absolute best it can be, rather than just being a vehicle for me wanting to be on television."

We think it sounds wonderful and will definitely be tuning in – and not just because it's made by three lesbians. "Three lezzas!" cackles Emma. "When does that ever happen?" **D**

The Kennedys starts next month on BBC1.

Full of crazy and bizarre anecdotes, Emma's new TV comedy is based on her 70s childhood

THE KENNEDYS



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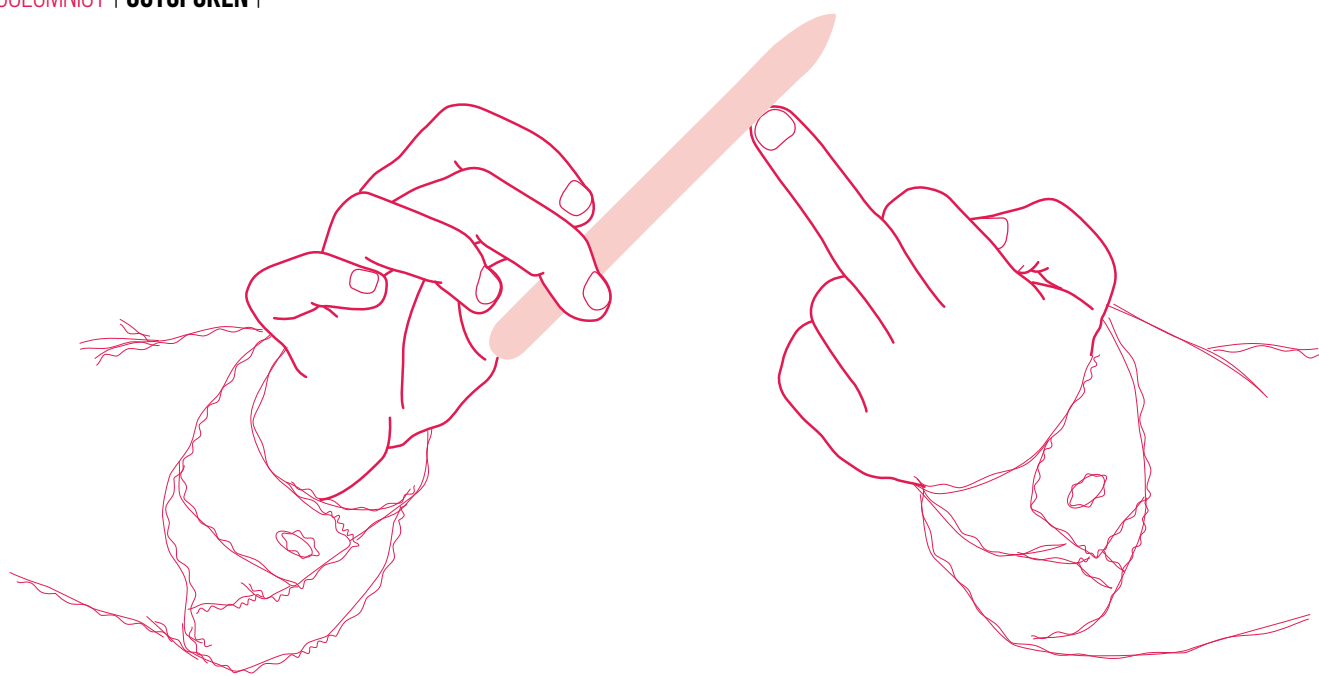
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Bite me



I have something to confess. I'm a biter. Not in a saucy way, although please feel free to think of me as a kind of sexy vampire.

Sadly, my biting habits are far more mundane but far more annoying. You see, for as long as I can remember I've bitten my nails. Not nibbled them, not gently nipped them. I devour them.

As a generality, I've always hated my paws. They are possibly the tiniest hands on an adult human you will ever see. I have little stubby fingers that annoy me, not least because they entirely restrict my ability to wear bling. When searching for a wedding ring I had to reject many lovely pieces of jewellery on the basis that anything broader than the width of a penny would look like a napkin ring strangling an uncooked chipolata. Of course, the size of my phalanges is a matter of genetics but, to make matters worse, a combination of stress and boredom led me to make my already miniscule digits worse by vigorously chomping at my nails, leaving me with red and bleeding stumps.

I was never fully aware of how obvious the effects of my habit were until a conversation I had in a pub about 20

years ago. I met my ex (who I was still friendly with) and her new girlfriend for a drink. This woman was much older, had a proper job and a posh flat and I was slightly in awe of her. She had the confidence of an older dyke who felt that it was her role in life to tell me how I should behave, to become a better lesbian. The conversation started badly, with me pretending to like Joni Mitchell to impress her. Unfortunately I realised I was unable to name a single song Ms Mitchell had sung, leading to much ridicule. The evening then descended into a bottomless pit of awkwardness when she moved on to analysing the state of my love-life.

The lady in question decided to dissect my personality, my looks and me, and identify why, in her view, I was single. After a long list that included the way I dressed, spoke and behaved, she concluded by slowly looking down at my hands, which at that point were mangled, and proclaimed: "And to top it all, no one will ever want to go with someone with disgusting hands like that."

I didn't have the confidence to say what I should have, of course. To tell her that it was none of her business how I looked. That she was patronising and insulting. That she only went out with women three decades younger than her because anyone with an ounce of sense

SUSAN CALMAN MAY BE A BITER BUT SHE'S NOT RUDE

and maturity would run a mile from such a controlling bitch. But I didn't. I may be a biter but I'm not rude.

It took 20 years to finally find a strategy that helped me stop my habit and it turns out the solution was incredibly easy. I simply allow myself one nail to bite, the one on my left thumb. I tuck it under my palm when I'm out so no one sees it, but can have a quick nibble when I need to.

I was delighted. I still have the hands of a doll but can, with a bit more confidence, display my digits to the world. And I didn't think things could get any better, until something even more wonderful happened. I saw her. The woman who told me that no one would want me because of my hands. I was in the supermarket and she appeared at the end of the aisle. Finally after 20 years I could do what I'd always wanted to. Filled with the new confidence my talons imbued in me, I took my middle finger, resplendent with a long nail like a miniature Wolverine, and slowly raised it in her direction.

I waited till her back was to me of course. I may not be a biter anymore but I'm still not rude. **D**

You can now buy the download of Susan Calman's first tour, *Lady Like*, from SusanCalman.com. susan@divamag.co.uk

It took me 20 years to finally stop biting my nails

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Let's play hunt the dildo



Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu famously said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". How true. What Lao

doesn't go on to mention, however, is that so too does the journey to recall the missing box of sex toys you haven't seen in 18 months, but you're sure is around here somewhere.

We all have a dildo box like this, that gets shunted around with us from flat to flat, labelled "Utensils Bedroom", and is then temporarily rehomed to a secure new location every time you receive a house guest, as if it were in witness protection, which, let's face it, it kind of is. You may not always find what you originally sought, but in the search for that elusive dildo box enlightenment may come in the form of a located missing passport, or long-lost antique silver pig brooch.

There are two strategies for hiding the dildo box, or so my lesbian friends have told me. The first is to hide it in plain sight; a John Lewis hatbox beside the telly being one option. Make sure nothing escapes though. Trust me, you never want to be in the situation where

SARAH WESTWOOD GOES IN SEARCH OF THAT VERY WELL-HIDDEN SEX TOY BOX

You lift the box from its resting place, blow the dust off and say, "Ah, that's where it went"

a vicar drops by unannounced for a small sherry and a poke around when your dildo's out of its box. Then you'd have to leap up and throw a large bath towel over it, claiming that the half-glimpsed shaft is a work-in-progress sculpture of Emmeline Pankhurst on horseback that you're not quite ready to reveal. A web of fibs will follow that leads to you being forcibly volunteered to repair the church's many dilapidated icons and teach Sunday school sculpture classes to local kids.

The second strategy is to hide the box somewhere so secret that, once you've hidden it, said location is expunged from your short-term memory. The whereabouts of the box has been so efficiently forgotten that even if you wanted to find it, say at short notice, in the dark, after a few glasses of pinot, you'd have no hope. Even if Anneka Rice were winched through your window at midnight, in her jumpsuit, to help with a bunch of clues, you still wouldn't find this hidden treasure. As for your cat-sitter, your neighbour the amateur drone pilot, or your friend's inquisitive search and rescue hound, they've got no chance. So at least with this strategy it's safely hidden, if not exactly readily accessible.

In fact, this way you actually forget

that you own a dildo until one day you're on a completely unrelated hunt – for your copy of *The English Patient* DVD, for example – and just happen upon it. And you'll lift the box gently from its resting place, with a nostalgic smile and an involuntary set of Kegel exercises, blow the dust off it and say, "Ah, that's where that went", before promptly moving it to another equally elusive hiding spot, tucked away with some Hoover attachments under the stairs, or behind the collected works of someone who's got a lot of collected works.

The problem with the secret location strategy is that when you're slightly forgetful a fun impromptu game of "hide the dildo" becomes the slightly less fun game of "hunt the missing dildo". The premise is somewhat similar, in that one of you lies on the bed shouting out helpful directions, while the other works up a sweat doing all the heavy lifting. Only, this time there's no satisfactory ending for either party, unless of course your search throws up a lost Bounty bar, in which case excuse yourself from the scene, go and put the kettle on and secretly scoff the evidence. **D**

Sarah is reading at Polari On Sea in Hastings on 22 September. polariliterarysalon.co.uk

ON HOW LIFE IS...

SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE RIDE AS GABE, YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD LESBIAN, NAVIGATES THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF LIFE.

YEAH... SHE MAY NEED A LITTLE HELP.

GABE, ARE YOU COMING TO KATE'S PARTY LATER? SHOULD BE A GOOD NIGHT!

WELL... I'D LIKE TO, BUT THERE'S A SMALL PROBLEM...

AGAIN?! GABE, YOU'VE GOT TO STOP COPPING OFF WITH OUR FRIENDS! WE'LL STOP GETTING INVITED TO PLACES!

UGH I KNOW. I'M TRYING WITH THE 'FRIENDS, NOT FOOD' RULE, I REALLY AM!

ANYWAY, GIVE OVER! I GENUINELY THINK THAT AS A LESBIAN, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE NEW, LESBIAN FRIENDS THAT ARE PURELY PLATONIC. JUST NO WAY!

WHAT? ARE YOU SERIOUS!?

YES! FORGET THAT YOU'RE VIRTUALLY MARRIED FOR A SECOND AND HUMOUR ME. YOU KNOW IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! IF YOU'RE HONEST...!

WELL - I ADMIT, CRUSHES CAN BE RIFE AMONGST GROUPS OF LESBIAN FRIENDS!

EXACTLY! I RECKON I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT IT'D BE LIKE TO SLEEP WITH EVERY SINGLE ONE OF MY FRIENDS, AT SOME POINT...!

BUT DON'T WORRY: I'M NOT DOING IT RIGHT NOW!

IF YOU LOVE WOMEN AND YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY A GROUP OF FRIENDS WHO ALSO HAPPEN TO BE ATTRACTIVE WOMEN, IT'S HARD TO RESIST!

WELL, I GUESS THE LIST OF QUALITIES THAT I FIND ATTRACTIVE IN A PARTNER ARE KIND OF THE SAME AS THOSE I LOOK FOR IN SOMEONE I'D LIKE TO BE FRIENDS WITH... SO YES, IT'S EASY TO SEE HOW THE LINES CAN BLUR A LITTLE...!

IT'S LIKE SOMETHING I HAVE TO GET OUT OF MY SYSTEM, BEFORE I CAN SETTLE INTO PLATONIC BLISS! I'VE JUST EMBRACED IT NOW. I WAS MUCH WORSE IN MY EARLY 20'S THAN I AM NOW, HOWEVER!

WELL, I'M IN MY EARLY 20'S AND I THINK IT'S POSSIBLE TO MAKE PLATONIC FRIENDS AND KEEP THEM AS SUCH...

THAT'S LOVELY, STACEY. HEARTWARMING TO HEAR! BUT HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THAT MANY OF YOUR 'PLATONIC' FRIENDS ARE PROBABLY HAVING ALL KINDS OF THOUGHTS ABOUT YOU...?!

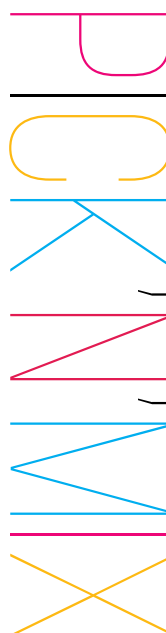
HAHA!

claire barry

PERSON OF THE MONTH

PENNY WONG

Australia has a long way to go when it comes to marriage equality, with Prime Minister Tony Abbott refusing to budge, even in the face of criticism from his own sister, who is a lesbian. Which is why voices like Penny Wong's are so important. The country's most high-profile LGBT politician delivered an emotional speech on same-sex marriage at the Labor Party conference last month, and wiped away tears as she received a 30-second standing ovation. "The aspiration for equality is remarkably persistent," Wong said. "We will continue until we win." Labor Party leader Bill Shorten has promised to legalise same-sex marriage within 100 days if he is elected next year. We can only hope he is.



CELEBRITY TWEETS

@EllenPage

Since when are whistles clean?

@marylambertsing

Today someone threw a tiara onstage and I feel like San Diego's lesbian princess.

@samirawiley

My heart is so full from the love that I receive from you everyday. I can't thank you enough for your support. I love you beyond beyond.

@Caradelevingne

Why do we not live in Magic Mike world!? All women should go on strike until their men can dance like Channing Tatum. Seriously...

@harto

While I enjoyed Demi Lovato's hot bod... Wait I'm sorry I lost my train of thought. #CoolForTheSummer

@AnnaPaquin

I'm missing a really intense game of hide and seek. must go. love and thanks again for all the birthday wishes. xoxoxo

@AngelHaze

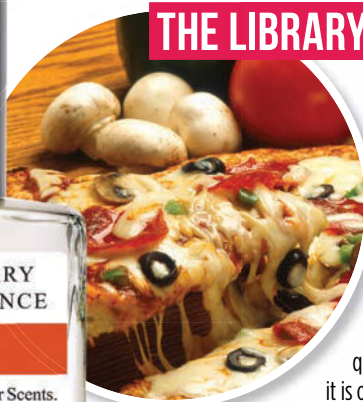
i believe in your eyes. theyre my religion

@Caitlyn_Jenner

@LaverneCox, you are fierce and fabulous! Your support means the world. Thank you for all that you do for the community. #TransIsBeautiful

WE LOVE...

THE LIBRARY OF FRAGRANCE



"I've got a surprise for you," I told my wife, spritzing myself smugly with a bottle of my new cologne. "Do you like it?" She took a sniff and wrinkled up her nose. "You smell like stale cheese." Oh well – I suppose Pizza is an acquired taste. Just one of over a hundred quirky scents from The Library Of Fragrance, it is one of the more extreme offerings, and they themselves admit that this scent "stretches the boundaries of wearable fragrance". But at just £15 a bottle you can afford to be adventurous. If smelling like a slice of pepperoni isn't your thing, don't worry – there are plenty of lovely conventional scents to choose from. We'll get round to trying those, as soon as we've ticked off Brighton Pier and Chip Paper.

thelibraryoffragrance.com

MEDIAWATCH WITH CARRIE LYELL

WHAT A DRAG



I'm sure, by now, you've heard all about Glasgow's Free Pride and its ill-fated decision to "ban" drag acts from

performing (note: that never actually happened). Last month, everyone from Pink News to Panti Bliss lined up to take potshots at a small community of LGBTQ volunteers who made a mistake. And admitted it. I'm not interested in debating whether or not drag acts are offensive – I think most of us can agree that drag kings and queens have played an important role in our history and continue to challenge heteronormative assumptions of gender – but in examining the divisions this story has unearthed and trying to heal those wounds. But they run deep. On my own Facebook timeline, somewhere I like to think is a relatively safe space, I saw several cis gay male friends and acquaintances refer to trans people as "pathetic victims" and "righteous idiots", and others who said that the trans people who raised concerns about drag acts were upset "cause they look better than they do". It's another example of what AB Silvera refers to as "Big Gay" (the same ones who threw their toys out of the pram when UKIP weren't allowed to march at Pride In London) asserting its authority and silencing the voices of those in this "community" who continue to be marginalised by the very people who claim to support them.

Yes, LGBT people are taking bigger and bigger strides towards full equality across the world. But it's becoming painfully clear that "equality" has been defined by rich, white, non-disabled gays, and the concerns of the rest of us don't really matter at all.

@Seej

The Womanizer looks pretty innocuous at first glance. It could be a shaver, thermometer or trimmer for some serious nasal hair. You could imagine it on the shelves of M&S. Once in your possession, though, you can be assured to treat your loved one(s) to several days of under-your-breath Britney Spears humming. This can strike at any time and particularly during direct contact with the object. Sexual. If you can ignore/enjoy this side effect, you may get around to trying it out. Using some water-based lube, you put a clitoris of your choice in the nozzle and turn it on. There are a selection of frequencies to scroll through using the large jewel button, adding a touch of class to the experience, and before long you're launched into an inevitable but somewhat premature orgasm. We did not go back for more. *Pros:* Great for LOLs. *Novel* to put your clit in something. *Cons:* Akin to being tasered in the parts*, even on the lowest setting.

*We are not superfans of direct clitoral stimulation, but if you are, knock yourself out. It really will hit the spot.

The Womanizer costs £129

and is available at Sh!

sh-womenstore.com/womanizer.html



READER'S REVIEW

THE WOMANIZER

If only all schools were like the DIVA Sex Academy. There'd be no truants and LBT students might actually learn something useful about sex and relationships. "School Head" DIVA ed Jane Czynszelska led the event, regaling us with fascinating facts about lesbian sex lives (did you know that almost half of lesbians aged 18-36 are monogamous?) before introducing her panel of saucy, savvy sexperts. Dr Anna Sansom – DIVA's Sex/Life editor – read us an erotic story written especially for L Fest. Let's just say the steam rose. Dr Meg John Barker, the bisexual non-binary counsellor, author and academic, suggested that a non-binary approach, whether or not we identify thusly, might make negotiating and enjoying sex easier. Sex and relationships psychotherapist Rachel Morris gave us suggestions about how to keep the vibe alive in long-term relationships, and last but by no means least, queer-hearted Amanda Gay Love invited us in to her fierce world of Tantra. And deep vaginal breathing. It's the closest we've ever come to group sex and, frankly, we'd like some more. Roll on next year! (Missed it?

Anna took notes! Read

'em here: tinyurl.com/DIVASexAcad.)

WE WERE THERE

LIVE. LIFE. L. DIVA SEX ACADEMY @ L FEST



Women still occupy the lowest-paid jobs. At the current rate it will be 70 years before the gender pay gap – currently almost 16% – eventually closes. Around 1.2 million women suffer domestic abuse each year and nearly half a million people are sexually assaulted. Conviction rates are low. Although at school girls outperform boys in every mainstream GCSE subject other than maths, and young women make up 57% of first degree university graduates, somewhere along their career path, women fall behind. An average woman working full-time from 18 to 59 will earn £361,000 less over her working life than an equivalent man. These are the stark facts about life for women in the UK in 2015, which is why a group of women will launch a new political party this month. That party is the Women's Equality Party. DIVA spoke to co-founder Sandi Toksvig about her vision for the future.

DIVA: The facts above make me rage and show how far we've still to go to achieve equality yet some still question why we need an equality party for women. Can you tell DIVA readers why you think they should join your party?

SANDI TOKSVIG: First of all, I think everyone should be in a rage. There is plenty to be cross about. Every day in the UK women face inequality at home, at work, in politics and in public life. That makes the UK a worse place to live for everybody. Women are 51% of the population and yet we are treated like a special interest group by politicians and that has to change. I've been complaining about this for decades – sometimes quietly to myself, sometimes loudly among friends, and sometimes very loudly in public. What I realised earlier this year is that I am fed up with complaining. I don't want to be someone who sits on the sofa and shouts at the television. It's time to get off my backside, get out there and do something about it. I think thousands of DIVA readers will want to do the

same. I meet so many women and men who are fed up of waiting for these problems to be fixed. So here is a really simple thought – let's not wait any longer. Let's fix them.

Can you explain how you see these statistics changing?

By working with women and men from every place and of every background, of all faiths and none, of every race and ethnicity, disabled and able-bodied, straight, gay, queer, cis, trans, bi, pick a thing: mobilising every single person who shares our belief that equality is better for everyone, until we simply cannot be ignored any more. By needling businesses who let women down and celebrating the ones who help women thrive. By making our voices heard, louder than ever before so that the politicians have to listen and maybe consider behaving better. For myself – I'll carry on telling jokes. Making people laugh at themselves until they realise how completely stupid it is to keep 51% of the population down.

Will you be standing candidates at local and national elections?

We want to be an electoral force because when the other parties see us taking votes away from them, that's when they will sit up and listen. So yes, we will stand candidates, though we are still working through the details of the plans for where, when, and who – we obviously want our members to choose their candidates democratically. In some places it may make more sense to endorse a candidate from another party who shares our values and signs up to our agenda; we are flexible and will do whatever it takes to get out issues addressed.

Many of the lesbians and bi women I speak to say they're disillusioned with parliamentary politics. I'm guessing you feel that way too. Is it possible to create a new political tradition do you think?

Absolutely! Or at least: I'm in trouble if it isn't. This idea, a party to sort out women's equality once and for all, is a big one and it's completely different from what's been tried before. I

JANE CZYZSELSKA TALKS TO SANDI TOKSVIG, CO-FOUNDER OF THE WOMEN'S EQUALITY PARTY, WHICH LAUNCHES THIS MONTH

know some experts in politics say it won't work because you have to work through the old party system. I know some experts in the women's movement say it won't work because you have to stay out of politics altogether. But the way I see it, we've been trying the old ways for my whole lifetime and for other women's lifetimes before that and it hasn't worked. I'm not going to sit on the sidelines saying change is impossible any more. No-one ever changed anything by doing the same failed thing over and over – so let's try something different. I believe in my bones it will work, plus I've already announced on Radio 4 that I'm going to do it. In Britain you don't mess with a promise to the Radio 4 audience.

There seems to already be a huge groundswell of excitement about WEP.

Over a thousand people signed up on the very first day we launched for membership, and more have been joining us in droves every day since, from every part of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We even have four members called Sandy (I can forgive them for the different spelling now they've joined!) We have 58 branches already, and the numbers go up every week as more and more people contact us, eager to set up a branch in their area. Is this a good time to reach out and tell people to join or start one of their own? Come on folks, let's roll up our sleeves and get cracking.


How will you address the intersectional needs of the diverse population of women in the UK?

If you know anything about me then you can't doubt how seriously we take the need to represent the glorious diversity of women (and men; let's not forget the boys) in the UK. Our steering group includes women of colour, women who identify as LGBT/queer, disabled women, women of all ages, incomes and backgrounds. It also includes men: because equality is better for everyone. And more importantly, we want to engage with and listen to people from every background, and of any gender too. There is no shortcut to listening: we know you can't just

"We should all be in a rage. Every day women face inequality at home, at work, in politics and in public life"

appoint a spokesperson for a community and think your job is done. We are aiming to reach as far as possible, working with friends and allies from BAME political (and non-political) communities, disability rights activists and within the LGBT+ communities, too. If we've left anyone out it most certainly was not on purpose and our branches are quick to point out any omissions.

How will the party address lesbophobia and biphobia?

DIVA has written about lesbophobia and biphobia showing up in many ways and the under- and misrepresentation of lesbian and bisexual women in the media is part of that. There were many years when I felt like the only lesbian on television. In our push to see all women equally and fairly represented in the media, we would certainly also want to support equal and fair representation of LBT women. Plus, as we women know, the "pink pound" has always benefited gay men more than it has gay women, so LBT women have plenty to gain when we campaign for equal pay! 

For more information on the WEP and how to join, visit womensequality.org.uk.

Women's equality now!

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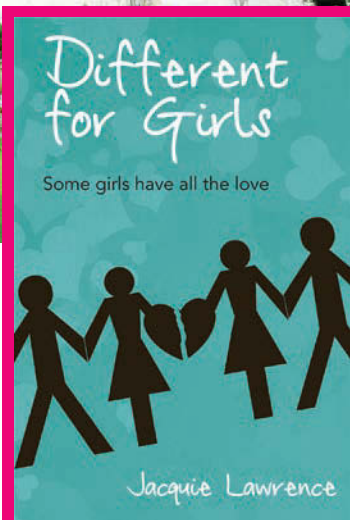
Jacque Lawrence's *Different For Girls* immortalises the glamorous lesbian lifestyle; the group of friends in her debut novel hop from Soho to Somerset's Babington House as often as the rest of us hop on buses. But you can live the dream too, simply by recommending a friend to read *DIVA*. Just get their email (with their permission!), send it to us and your name will be entered into the free prize draw to win a two-night stay at a luxury country house hotel.

Part of the Soho House portfolio, Babington House in Somerset is where we'll be sending two lucky *DIVA* readers. Randomly drawn, the winning couple will be invited as guests for an exclusive two-

night stay at the fashionable boutique hotel. Dinner to the value of £150 is on the house. So what are you waiting for? Share the love and be in with a chance to stay at the location *Country Life* magazine described as "relaxed and understated luxury". To enter, email edit@divamag.co.uk, with Babington House in the subject line and introduce a friend to *DIVA*. Deadline: 16 September.

Prize based on two people sharing one double bedroom, blackout dates apply.

Prize includes total meal spend to the value of £150. No cash substitute. babingtonhouse.co.uk



DIFFERENT FOR GIRLS (ZITEBOOKS)

by Jacque Lawrence

Enter a world where love, sex and suspense meet betrayal, cruelty and heartbreak. Fran and Cam, thrown joyously together again after a heartbreaking split, find their future unexpectedly compromised by the consequences of a random act Cam committed during their time apart. Meanwhile Gemma and Jude, newly in love, are torn apart by Gemma's fake fiancé, whose horrific secret Jude has just discovered. Then there are Brooke and Nicola, married for seven years, whose future is threatened by something ominous that they seemingly have no control over. This is a world where the survival of love is all that matters, and a world where being different is, ultimately, the new normal.



Georgia: playful homage to multicultural London

GEORGIA

Georgia (Domino)

Written, performed and produced in her home studio, Georgia's eponymous debut is both a playful dance album and a homage to multicultural London. Samples of Brazilian funk, West African percussion and Qawwali music are spliced alongside grime, dub and hip-hop. Digits, Kombine and Nothing Solutions layer liquid synths with pop melodies, whilst Be Ache and Move Systems showcase Georgia's distorted beats, twitching FX and playful vocals. Listen.



BEACH HOUSE

Depression Cherry (Bella Union)

Over the space of four albums, Baltimore's Beach House have created their own distinctive sound. A quieter, more meditative affair than Teen Dream and Bloom, Depression Cherry is just as hypnotic, with the duo layering their blissful vocals over shimmering and effervescent guitars, drums and synths. Sublime.



LIZZY MERCIER DESCLOUX

Press Color (Light in The Attic)

A pioneer of New York's no wave scene, Lizzy Mercier Descloux released her fantastic debut in 1979. Lovingly remastered by LITA, it marries deeply rhythmic bass, minimal drums and tight funk grooves with Lizzy's distinctive French vocals and avant-garde experimentation. Think ESG crossed with early Sonic Youth.

MUSIC

ESSENTIAL AMERICANA & GARAGE ROCK LINDI ORTEGA

Faded Gloryville

Hot on the heels of 2013's excellent Tin Star, Nashville artist Lindi Ortega returns with another masterclass in heartbreak. Ten timeless ballads orchestrated with rich pedal steel guitar, brushed drums and honky-tonk melodies, they perfectly showcase her powerhouse vocals and picture-postcard lyrics about love, loss and faded dreams.

SHANNON AND THE CLAMS

Gone By The Dawn

Oakland trio Shannon And The Clams sound like they've stepped off the set of a John Waters movie. Their fabulous fourth album features 13 songs driven by twanging guitars, chugging bass, doo-wop choruses and Shannon's commanding garage rock vocals. Impossible to resist without singing along!

DOWNLOAD THIS PETITE NOIR

La Vie Est Belle (Double Six)

Like Blood Orange, South African producer Petite Noir enjoys making music that transcends boundaries. As a result, his ambitious debut album finds him dropping his dramatic vocals over a constantly shifting collage of atmospheric rock, power-pop, Afrobeat and electro. Highlights include MDR, Colour and the euphoric Just Breathe.

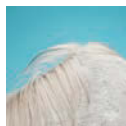
IF YOU LIKE ELECTRELANE

HAIKU SALUT

Etch and Etch Deep (How Does It Feel)

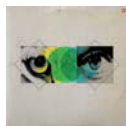
Derbyshire trio Haiku Salut compose beautiful, otherworldly songs that morph elements of post-rock, baroque pop and folk with intricate electronic loops and percussion. Hearts Not Parts and Things Were Happening feature lush vocal harmonies but the remaining songs are compelling instrumentals driven by warm melodies.

3 BEST TRACKS



WIDOWSPEAK Girls

A must for Mazzy Star fans, Girls is a six-minute song that layers Molly Hamilton's velveteen vocals over seductive, slow-burning rock.



DEATH & VANILLA California Owls

Swedish trio Death & Vanilla deliver five minutes of shoegazing heaven with tremolo guitar, Moog organ, bird sounds and lush vocals.

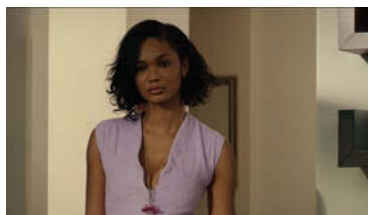


KWAMIE LIV Higher

DIVA favourite Kwamie Liv morphs minimal R&B with moody, Angelo Badalamenti atmospheric on her gorgeous, defiant new single.

DOPE

Dir Rick Famuyiwa



There's only one word for Dope's hyperactive plotting, playfully erudite dialogue and scrumptious soundtrack. Malcolm (the excellent Shameik Moore) has three ambitions: to dress like he's in a 90s hip-hop video, to stay out of trouble and to get into Harvard. Unfortunately, in Inglewood CA, trouble has a way of inviting you to its birthday party, planting drugs on you and tracking you down with a gun. A slice of the action is given to Malcolm's lesbian bestie Diggy (Kiersey Clemons), though her energetically horny persona serves to smokescreen the movie's latent misogyny (Chanel Iman's Lily comes in for the worst of it). Otherwise, yes – it's dope.

In cinemas 4 September

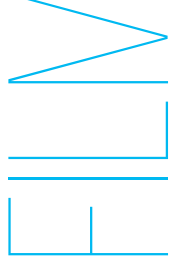
THE SECOND MOTHER

Dir Anna Muylaert



If you're bothered by the gender pay gap or angry at the 1%, this warmly witty drama from Brazil will be right up your street. Live-in domestic helper Val (Regina Casé) makes the best of life with a wealthy family, enthusiastically caring for their son Fabinho (Michel Joelsas) despite not having seen her own child for years. When her daughter Jéssica (Camila Márdila) comes to stay, the balance of power begins to shift. Fuelled by sparkling acting and a gripping script, Anna Muylaert's award-winning film pokes fun at the everyday hypocrisy of the privileged. Casé and Márdila do their best to out-charisma each other.

In cinemas 4 September

ONLINE**A GIRL AT MY DOOR**

Dir July Jung

It's hard to believe this many-layered South Korean movie about a lesbian outsider is its writer-director's first effort. Don't be put off by the slow first half: the film eventually unspools into a noirish drama, all unclear motives and unexpected twists. Police chief Young-Nam (Doona Bae) makes a sympathetic old-fashioned hero, whose attempts to protect an abused teenager arouse the suspicions of those around her, while Sae-ron Kim turns in a brilliantly disturbing performance as the 14-year-old Do-Hee. Her portrayal is uncomfortable throughout, but my only real qualm about it came at the film's crisis point, where she makes an unrealistically adult decision.

In cinemas 18 September

**NEW QUEER FILM FESTIVAL
SCOTTISH QUEER
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

In its very first year, Glasgow-based SQIFF brings together great queer cinema, workshops, discussions and performances, with an eye to accessibility and safer spaces. Opening with the UK premiere of Swedish comedy Dyke Hard, it also features the Scottish premiere of Girltrash: All Night Long by DEBS' Angela Robinson.

SQIFF takes place 24-27 September.

Find out more at sqiff.org**1950S ROMANCE
CAMP BELVIDERE**

The glamorous Astrid Ovalles founded Recluse Films to put queer, female stories on the big screen. She wrote, directed and stars in her first attempt, Camp Belvidere, a 40-minute short about illicit desire at a 1950s summer camp. While its retro stylings aren't all that convincing, its pretty stars have undeniable chemistry.

Rent Camp Belvidere at campbelvidere.com**RUTA GEDMINTAS
THE INCIDENT**

If you watched the whole of Lip Service just to enjoy Frankie's swagger, don't miss Ruta Gedmintas' starring role in this dark psychological drama. Written and directed by self-taught newcomer Jane Linfoot, The Incident explores the troubling connection between a successful young couple and a vulnerable teenage girl.

Find out more at twitter.com/TheIncidentFilm**ONLINE****FEMINISM
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- The Ask Amy space allows individual's concerns about anything from their rights to feminist politics to be discussed and solved.
- feminist.com



No weapon off-limits: Danielle Cormack, Pamela Rabe and Nicole da Silva in *Wentworth Prison*

WENTWORTH PRISON

Lock us up and throw away the key, because *Wentworth Prison* is back on Channel 5 and we think this season might be the best one yet. Sentenced to life without parole for the murder of Brayden Holt, we've seen Bea Smith (Danielle Cormack, *interview p50*) battle against governor Ferguson (Pamela Rabe) for ultimate control of the prison and no weapon is off-limits as the death toll rises. But who will emerge victorious? Whoever wins, we've got a feeling it won't be pretty. Missed an episode? Catch up now on Demand 5 or get season three on DVD from 12 October.

Wednesdays, 10pm, Channel 5



WHAT WE'RE WATCHING

GREAT BRITISH BAKE OFF

Haven't been watching much telly? Too busy out enjoying the sun? Stop that right now and get your soggy bottom back on the couch because GBBO is back and it's more delicious than ever. Tune in now to find out the answers to all-important questions like how does Paul Hollywood get his hair so spiky? Can Mel and Sue be any more perfect? How many more Baked Alaskas will end up in the bin? And: who will be crowned this year's champion? So what are you waiting for? BAKE!

Wednesdays, 8pm, BBC1



WE CAN'T WAIT FOR

MASTER OF NONE

We already had high hopes for Aziz Ansari's new show about Dev, a 30-year-old actor from New York who has trouble deciding what he wants to eat, much less the pathway for the rest of his life. After all, everything touched by Ansari, who plays loveable rogue Tom Haverford in *Parks And Recreation*, turns to gold. But this was before we found out *Bones* writer Lena Waithe would be playing a queer woman of colour. Now we're feverish with anticipation.

6 November, Netflix

TELEVISION

DON'T MISS

RIZZOLI AND ISLES



Even though we know they're probs just queerbaiting us, we still can't get enough of *Rizzoli And Isles*. Who knows, maybe this will be the season that the writers stop playing with our emotions and finally concede that the two Boston detectives, played by Angie Harmon and Sasha Alexander, are totes in love. We'll see.

27 August, 9pm, Alibi

FUND THIS

LOST N FOUND



It seems like every day we're sent a Kickstarter link to help make a webseries, and while they're not always very good, this is one sitcom we'd really love to see on our screens. A little bit *Friends*, a little bit *Kimmy Schmidt*, *Lost N Found* is a 12-part series based in LA, and creators Ashley Ann Alvarado and Brenna Leigh Noguez need your dough. Help 'em out.

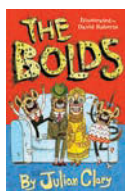
pinkstart.me/en/lostnfound

COMING SOON

THE KENNEDYS

Chatting to Emma Kennedy (see p22) has got us even more excited for what is set to be a smash hit this autumn. Based on her book, *The Tent, The Bucket And Me*, *The Kennedys* is an insight into our former cover star's early life, and a throwback to a simpler time on a council estate in Stevenage. Expect hilarious 70s outfits – "You're going to want to have sex with all them," says Emma – and a lot of laughs.

September, BBC1



**CHILDREN'S
THE BOLDS**
Julian Clary

Fantastic illustrations by David Roberts perfectly compliment Clary's exuberant story about

a savvy hyena family living disguised as humans in Teddington, Middlesex. A visit to a safari park and tensions with crotchety neighbour Mr McNumpy lead to surprising results. Great fun.

Anderson Press, £6.99



**ROMANCE
THIS LONDON LOVE**
Clare Lydon

When bereaved magazine designer Kate Carter first meets trim, tanned florist Meg, she's horribly flustered and not even sure if a florist could be a lesbian. Meg, meanwhile, is still living unhappily with ex-girlfriend Tanya, causing complications in this entertaining rom com.

Custard Books, £9.99, ebook £4.35



**FICTION
SIGNS FOR LOST CHILDREN**
Sarah Moss

Set in Japan and Cornwall in the 1880s, Moss's new novel follows on from her last, *Bodies Of Light*, to explore loneliness in the new relationship between pioneering doctor Ally and engineer Tom. Rich, well-crafted storytelling with plenty to ponder.

Granta, £12.99

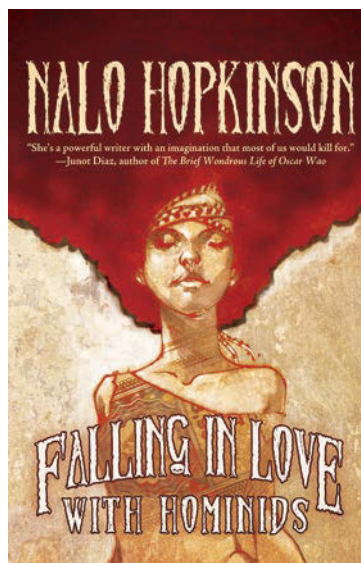
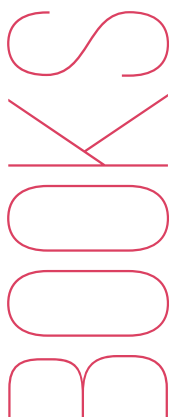


**HISTORICAL FICTION
GOLDDIGGER**
Hilary McCollum

Haunted by her life in Ireland with beautiful lost love Kitty, 1840s NYC shoeshine boy Frances

hears about the Californian gold rush and heads overland to seek her fortune. A solid, dramatic debut exploring passion, loss and the taking of second chances.

Bella Books, £12



SHORT FICTION

FALLING IN LOVE WITH HOMINIDS

Nalo Hopkinson

As she explains in the foreword to this collection of short stories assembled from her most recent decade of work, Caribbean-born Canadian sci fi writer Nalo Hopkinson hasn't always been a big fan of people. These stories record her gradual movement towards falling in love with hominids, she says, and as you read you can see the ambivalence she's alluding to coming through.

You can see it in the apocalyptic *The*

Easthound, where shivering homeless kids chug vodka and play word games to take their minds off the horrifying sprouting danger that lurks close by. It's there in the terrific *Message In A Bottle* too, where the narrator begins by admitting that he doesn't understand children: they seem like aliens. They creep him out. These are voices that step fresh and original from the page, beautifully-written stories in which fantasy and folklore traditions can combine to bring forth chickens that breathe fire and characters eternally haunting shopping malls. Wonderful.

Tachyon, £10.99



**SHORT FICTION
ROWING TO EDEN**

Amy Bloom

Flawless stories from writer and psychotherapist Bloom's three collections to date run deep with emotional truths and include the occasional LGBT character too. As does her latest novel, *Lucky Us*; a warm, funny story about two sisters in 1940s America, also highly recommended.

Granta, £9.99



**SEXUAL HEALTH
HOT PANTS!**

Lisa Vinebaum & Isabelle Gauthier

Formerly an underground DIY gynaecological zine, *Hot Pants!* offers a range of tried and tested herbal remedies and sexual health information. Including some basic anatomical, fertility and health info, plus information on aphrodisiacs, herbs and infusions, it could be useful to have to hand.

Microcosm, £7.99



**CRIME FICTION
SPLINTER THE SILENCE**

Val McDermid

Clinical psychologist Tony Hill and struggling "functioning drunk" DCI Carol Jordan return, facing a meticulous killer who makes his feminist victims look like suicides. McDermid's finger is on the pulse with noxious social media harassment a key theme. Confidently creepy.

Little, Brown, £18.99



Team spirit: cast members Kirsty Malpass, Rosemary Ashe and Sara Crowe with pupils from Bablake School, Coventry at the press launch for *Crush*

NAVY KNICKS AND HOCKEY STICKS

**ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT**
More information on p9 | divadigital.co.uk

"It was really about writing the musical we wanted to see," says Maureen Chadwick, of the inspiration for *Crush*, the show she created with her partner Kath Gotts. Set in an English girls' boarding school in the 1960s, *Crush* is a charming, witty and hilariously lezzed-up take on the schoolgirl fiction genre – riffing on inspirations like the Mallory Towers books and original St Trinians movies.

"Because the schoolgirl crush is so embedded in that tradition, it just seemed the perfect subject for romantic musical comedy treatment," explains Chadwick, who scripted the show.

LOUISE CAROLIN TALKS TO MAUREEN CHADWICK AND KATH GOTTS ABOUT CRUSH, THEIR SPARKLING NEW MUSICAL SET IN A 1960S GIRLS SCHOOL

"Lesbian culture in theatre has tended to be things like *The Children's Hour*, all rather dark," chips in Gotts, who was responsible for lyrics and music. "We wanted some lesbian froth!"

They certainly hit the mark there. Chadwick describes one of the highlights of the show: "One of the big features is the arrival of this mysterious games mistress, Miss Givings, who's actually in disguise. She has a number, *Navy Knicks*, where she rouses the girls into hockey action, saying it's for their survival, they have to be fit to win – you know, team spirit – and so we've got a show number with girls with hockey boots and hockey sticks, a

kick-line and tap-dancing."

Crush was first conceived in the early days of Chadwick and Gotts' relationship, during the era of Section 28, when it would have been "completely subversive to propose celebrating romantic love between schoolgirls," says Chadwick.

But the idea has finally found its moment. An Arts Council-funded workshop performance last year brought the multi-generational audience of (mainly) women to its feet for a standing ovation; this autumn will see the show tour to Coventry, Brighton and Richmond.

Big Broad, Chadwick and Gotts' pro-

duction company, has teamed up with Stonewall and Diversity Role Models to create an educational outreach programme that will bring local school pupils into theatres to see *Crush* and send LGBT people into classrooms to share their experiences, as part of the national curriculum's diversity requirement.

Schoolkids and lesbians aside, who do they expect to see in the audience? "Anybody who loves traditional musicals, really," suggests Gotts. "It's not that it's a musical for lesbians – it is, but it's a musical for everybody. I suppose what's happened during the period that we've had it parked in the bottom drawer is that the world has caught up and now lesbians are for everyone, rather than it being a niche thing."

The phenomenal success of *Orange Is The New Black* proves her point. But what of the increased commodification of lesbian sexuality, which is so often associated with male titillation? Don't worry – there'll be no "sexy school-girls" here. "There's no way the show allows access for the dirty old mac brigade, or anyone who's approaching the subject from the wrong angle," states Chadwick firmly, in slightly headmistress tones.

Crush takes place in a boarding school established by the fictional suffragette, Dorothea Dosserdale, to offer girls the education its founder believed would give them the key to independent lives. By 1963 it has been taken over by a conservative new head, whose mission is to train her pupils to become good mothers to the all-important "future sons of England". It's both a classic trope of schoolgirl fiction (replacement headmistress threatens school values) and a true reflection of an historical shift in postwar attitudes to girls' education, as Rosemary Auchmuty points out in an essay you can read on the *Crush* website (bigbroad.co.uk/news/crush-and-girls-school-fiction).

First popular in the 1920s, schoolgirl fiction found an eager cross-class audience with girls who loved these intrinsically feminist tales of female friendship, adventure, leadership and, yes, love. But by the late 30s their subversive power had been spotted and the genre became both the focus of both ridicule and homophobic censorship.

The female universe of the school-girl novel celebrated in *Crush* echoes

another of Chadwick's creations, the locked world of *Bad Girls*, the TV drama set in a women's prison. Following its enormous on-screen success, this too was developed as a stage musical by Chadwick and co-creator Ann McManus, with music and lyrics by Gotts. *Bad Girls The Musical* recently celebrated its 100th amateur production since the rights were released six years ago.

As a couple, Chadwick and Gotts are "an institution", as Chadwick puts it: "We've been together for ever and ever." They first met at a fancy dress party, "through a pot plant". Chadwick was dressed as a sailor and "was quite scary, actually," according to Gotts, though she clearly got over her first impression. Both were students at the time, Chadwick having returned to university to study philosophy as a mature student.

What is it like being partners in both life and work? Their joint creative process seems rooted in great trust and understanding of each other's way of working. "We're normally quite grumpy with each other about work stuff, aren't we?" reveals Gotts. "If I've been working on a song, I have to get to a certain stage before I'm ready to share."

"In the bathroom this morning, I was in the bath, running dialogue through my head, and Kath comes in and she's singing this song. It just goes on all the time but it doesn't feel like horrible work, it just feels like we're in a groove," says Chadwick.



Girls' world: Sara Crowe (Miss Austin) and Rosemary Ashe (Miss Bleacher)

The show that sat in a drawer for more than two decades is testament to this partnership's huge capacity for fun, wit and rousing numbers. Now it's just a case of getting those bums on seats. Says Chadwick: "If we can get people to laugh and cry and go out singing a tune, too, then we've done our job!"

Crush is at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, 4-19 September; Theatre Royal, Brighton, 22-26 September; Richmond Theatre, London, 29 September-3 October. For further information and to book tickets, go to bigbroad.co.uk/productions/crush-the-musical.

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"The world has caught up and now lesbians are for everyone, rather than it being a niche thing"

"THE ISSUES CRUSH DEALS WITH ARE SO IMPORTANT"

STEPHANIE CLIFT ON HER ROLE AS SCHOOLGIRL SUSAN

My character, Susan, is led by love. She's obsessed by Camilla, who is hilariously flamboyant and bit stuck up. She's having a tough time at home because her mum and dad don't agree with her being a lesbian, and that's a really big struggle for her. All she wants is to love and for people to accept her. She's blinded to the fact that she's in a love triangle with her best friend who adores her; she just doesn't see that. But the blinkers are taken off...!

The issues *Crush* deals with are so important. When I read the script I imagined it very much like my old school, which was run by nuns. A good friend of mine realised she was gay about year 10, year 11. She confided in me; I think it was something she didn't want but she just couldn't help it. Now she has a girlfriend, her family know and everyone's accepting. It's that funny age when you don't understand why you are the way you are. My mum always taught me, it's ok to be whatever you want, you just need to be happy. So as a friend, I always tried to be encouraging and supportive.

I'm glad school pupils will be going to see this show. I think it will open their eyes. Depending on the age they are, some might think it's funny, some might relate to it. I hope they walk away thinking as I did when I was younger: you need to be happy and everyone needs to accept what you want in life.

CHRISTINA HARDY, 28

My choice to be an out teacher was made because I heard so many young women embarrassed or struggling with their sexuality. I never received any clear guidance at school about how this would be regarded, nor any reassurance that I would be supported against any negative backlash. My negative experiences from pupils were few and far between – mostly their views weren't views at all but recall from something they heard adults at home saying and once you unpicked it – which I got brave enough to do – they saw a different side to their argument. In some households it would be dangerous for those children to challenge homophobia even if they wanted to, so I didn't resent them. The main negative experiences I had were from staff. Quite worrying that they were working with LGBT pupils.



EMMA, 31

The most important reason I'm out at school is because I remember being 15 years old, at a Catholic school, and desperately in need of someone to talk to about it – but when I tried talking to my mentor, I got shut down. If I can make just one kid feel their life will not be so difficult then I'm happy with that. A year eight boy came up to me at the end of a session I led on gender and sexuality and shook my hand saying, "Well done for telling us that, Miss, I still think you're a sound teacher". I used clips from the Stonewall film *Fit* to help create discussion and the kids responded with amazing maturity so that's a tip for any other teachers out there!

stonewall.org.uk

AMY TAYLOR, 29

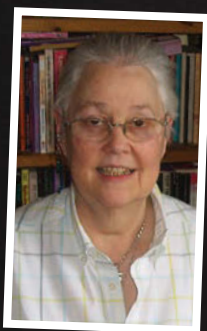
I work as a part-time drama teacher, and also run youth theatres. My rule is, if a child asks, I always tell the truth. Which sometimes takes some explaining, but there's no doubt it's worth it.



NAZMIA JAMAL, 36

I've been a teacher for 11 years. Queer kids blow my mind. I've always been out so they come and tell me, sometimes years after they've left school, that they've come out too. I'm so proud of

them all. I've got lots of stories. The girl who left me speechless when she asked, "So... studs or femmes?" The boy quoting the exact wording I'd used to come out to their class two years before and telling me it was "important". I've been lucky.



SUE SANDERS, 68, CHAIR OF SCHOOLS OUT

I taught in state schools and colleges through the late 60s, 70s and 80s and have always been out. I considered it essential to be honest about who I was and not lie by omission. Being a middle class, white, able-bodied drama teacher gave me some protection, where others were discriminated against or found it too threatening. I fought Section 28 very publicly; the staff and students saw me on television and there was little difficulty. I had a very strong supportive network and was a member of Schools OUT.

schools-out.org.uk,
lgbthistorymonth.org.uk

OUT AT SCHOOL

DIVA READERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES OF BEING OUT IN THE CLASSROOM AS PUPILS AND TEACHERS, THEN AND NOW...

EMILY HOWARD, 20

I came out during sixth form, and a handful of other students came out at around the same time. Before age 15, the other kids often threw around homophobic slurs and teased kids for being “gay”. But then I realised that much of the homophobic sentiment wasn’t actually intended. As the other kids became more mature, being LGBT at school wasn’t a big deal. There was very much a don’t-ask-don’t-tell attitude. LGBT issues were skirted around in sex education, and teachers rarely reprimanded kids for using homophobic slurs. Education should tackle homophobia actively, rather than ignoring it; plus schools definitely need to take action in terms of trans* issues: for example gender neutral toilets and changing rooms.



SOPHIE, 16

I started to come out to my friends as bi while I was in year 10. They were all accepting and supportive albeit a little shocked! Then,

I realised that I am actually a lesbian and had to do the whole coming out thing again. School and college have been the places where I felt most safe and comfortable being out; the younger generation are far more accepting. My college even has an LGBT+ support group. The educational setting has been a far more accepting environment than I expected.

SOPHIE, 22

I came out in my third year at school. Considering it was a Catholic school, I was surprised at how well people took it. Most were glad I felt comfortable enough around them to come out. However, for PE we shared the changing rooms with another class, full of ‘popular’ girls, and they weren’t thrilled about sharing a changing room with me. They actually made a petition for me to change in a separate room, in case I looked at them. The petition was put to bed by the teacher and my best friend made a point by hugging me, half naked!



JOSSIE, 20

I was 15 when I came out to my friends as bisexual and it spread around my state school like wildfire. As far as I could tell nobody cared too

much. Things got more interesting when the teachers found out. At the beginning of the week I was elected Head Girl. I’ve no doubt it was discussed in the staff room and my mildly misogynistic geography teacher could no longer look me in the eye. But for the most part people seemed supportive, and it was so worth it for the “welcome to the team” smile I got a few days later from our sports coach.

JENNY, 30s

I work as a teaching assistant in a Roman Catholic primary school. I am out to all my colleagues. The fact that I am gay is simply not an issue: I would go so far as to say that everyone, including the Catholics, just don’t get why people are making such a fuss about it. I’m not out to the kids though, as it wouldn’t be appropriate to their age and level of maturity. If a child asked me directly whether I was gay then I would tell the truth, but to be honest the concept of ‘sexuality’ is only beginning to occur to a few of them by the age at which they leave.

What I do find a tricky issue to address is how to handle the use of ‘gay’ words as insults. I’ve not yet worked out how to explain that it’s not a rude (swear) word, but not a word we use as an insult, without explaining the (honest) contemporary meaning.

KATE, 32

I was working with a group of year sixes who kept calling things that were rubbish “gay”. I kept asking them not to do it but they responded that no-one gay was around so it didn’t matter. I felt that I then had to tell them I was. The head was supportive but kids never mentioned it again... I think because I didn’t look like a stereotypical gay woman they didn’t believe me.

SURAN DICKSON, 38, FOUNDER OF DIVERSITY ROLE MODELS



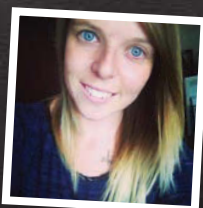
I taught from 2000 to 2011, in the UK and in New Zealand, and was out in all staff rooms. I didn’t see a lot of homophobia at school, it just wasn’t really talked about. But I did realise that students are really curious about their teachers and the more human they seemed, the more we liked them and the more we learned – either life lessons or curricular lessons.

Students were curious but respectful – to my face anyway, I’m sure loads of comments were passed behind my back but that’s par for the course as a teacher!

A visionary school will enable its staff to be themselves and to act as role models to all those young people who feel different for some reason or another. Strong leadership will ensure that policies are embedded, homophobia is stamped on robustly and that every staff member can be themselves at work. Students’ homophobic/transphobic views dissipate very quickly when they meet an LGBT person they like and respect – out LGBT teachers have a significant role to play here but they must be supported and feel safe to do so.

diversityrolemodels.org

LINDSEY, 26



I came out around age 13: I actually told my PE teacher first. None of my friends were phased and there were very few bullies – although

I was short, goofy and wore specs, I was a bit of a mouthpiece so guess my bark scared them off.

However, as an adult I have experienced a lot of verbal abuse from students regarding my sexuality; especially when I was working as a teaching assistant in a high school. It seems things are harder now.”

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MORGAN, 24, TEACHER IN THE US

I do not feel it is important for my students to know and understand much about my personal life outside of the classroom. The reasons range from personal preference, to the amount of information I'm comfortable divulging, and the fear I still hold as to how people will react and respond. However, I make it my mission to let all students know where I stand when it comes to acceptance and understanding of others and their

differences. Students are definitely much more open than when I was 14, but it's never perfect. I will always fight for our students, just like I did when our school was given a chance to dress up for a day. I contacted the parents of a male gender non-conforming student for permission to buy him a dress, which they supported and agreed – in the end he wore a fabulous little black dress that day. There were many looks, some snickers and jokes, but I will never, ever forget the look on his face when he walked into my classroom for first period. The glow he had around him and the friends he had supporting him was incredible.



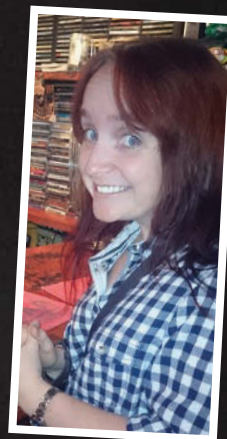
LUCY WAKE, 22, FOUNDER OF OUT IN EDUCATION

I came out to a teacher I trusted when I was 15. For me, even though I was a bit of a loner at school, the problem wasn't the other kids. The main issue was that there was no acknowledgement in the curriculum or the classroom. While there were undoubtedly teachers who would have been incredibly supportive, there seemed to be many more who had no idea how to talk about sexuality and how to support LGBTQ students coming to terms with their sexuality. With

Out In Education, most effective way we have found of challenging both ignorance and homophobia in schools is surprisingly the simplest – using "gay" in a positive educational context removes the stigma.

outineducation.org

OUT AT SCHOOL



VICKIE, 35

I only came out when I was doing my A-levels because it was too risky. I was the only lesbian I knew. When I did come out, I was surprised

at the solidarity my friends showed, but I lost a few too: one friend stopped talking to me completely, and I lost lots of church friends. I've been a teacher for over 10 years and my sexuality was a secret for at least five of those. I was worried that I would be judged unfit for teaching; Section 28 was on the news and if I was out, I could be seen as promoting homosexuality. At the moment I'm in a relationship with another teacher who works at the same primary school in Southampton. Although the staff know, we don't want the parents to know. Parents can be incredibly protective and bigoted when it comes to their children's welfare. The headteacher is very supportive but the anxiety is always there. My nightmare is that some parent will find out, go to the local newspaper and announce some ridiculous tabloid-style hatred.

JEN, 38

As a student I wasn't out. Our PSE teacher sat and told us: "Some of you will fancy other girls and some of you will fancy other boys. These are just crushes and it will go away." It was just talked about like it was a phase. As a teacher, I'm out. If I'm not out, how can I tackle homophobic language in the classroom? I have had one serious homophobic slur towards me in four years – dealt with quickly. These days, if someone says, "That's so gay", I don't have to teach them it's wrong: the class do it for me. They go silent and shake their heads, and that student usually mumbles, "Sorry Miss" and turns beetroot red. It doesn't often happen any more, and being out has given me the ability to tackle issues and stereotypes head on.

THERESA, 31

I have recently come out as a teacher at a primary school in Birmingham. I didn't make a big song or dance, just casually mentioned my fiancée in conversations and soon everyone knew. It's been brilliant. I was so scared and worried about being judged but in I can honestly say not a single colleague of any age or background has treated me differently. I am moving to a new school in September and I hope my experience is just as positive.



ALI, 28

I came out at sixth form in 2004, and had a really amazing experience. There were four of us as "out" sixth-formers

and we were treated very well, but obviously not everyone felt able to come out at school. My peers were incredibly supportive and open-minded and I had a teacher who even spoke openly about defying Section 28 if it meant her pupils felt empowered to speak about their sexuality. I also had teachers who, whilst not out, were real role models.



Out on the telly (from left):
Sue Perkins, Mary Portas
and Alice Arnold



WHERE ARE WE WITHOUT A SCRIPT?

For the purpose of this article, and in homage to American television, I will be referring to factual programming in all its hybrid forms (reality, factual entertainment, lifestyle and documentary) as “non-scripted programming”. Over the last 15 years, non-scripted programming has exploded across our television screens, with an increasing number of lesbian and bi women as contestants and presenters, but is it our representation that has improved or have we become the very televisual clichés and stereotypes that we were trying to avoid?

LGBT participants are far more prolific on American television; so much so that Logo, the queer subscription channel, commissioned *Real Gay*, a reunion

FROM BIG BROTHER TO BAKE OFF, JACQUIE LAWRENCE LOOKS AT THE TREATMENT OF LESBIAN AND BI WOMEN IN FACTUAL TELEVISION

show featuring LGBT participants from many different reality shows.

Non-scripted programming had its first big hit in the UK with *Big Brother*, in 2000. I was working at Channel 4 when the first housemates were cast and remember wondering how Anna, the lesbian nun (a casting producer’s dream), would fare on such an innovative, if slightly scary, show. As it turned out, the impact she made still resonates, not because she was the first lesbian to be cast in such a role but because she was such a thoughtful and grounded individual, compared to say Nasty Nick or Nicola the Nudist.

Big Brother host Davina McCall has said that Anna Nolan was the only “housemate” she ever befriended and

that the two remain friends to this day. Anna is now a television host in her own right, mirroring Sue Perkins’ role in *The Great Irish Bake Off*. Since Anna there have been another 14 lesbian or bi women as participants on *Big Brother*, one for every series, with most identifying as bisexual. (As an aficionado of the show, my favourite was Lisa from the hilarious Lisa and Dave combo in *Big Brother 10*.)

My own audit reveals that there have been far more bisexual women participants than lesbians in the same category of factual entertainment formats. We might therefore assume that casting producers are keener to go for the double whammy they assume they will get from bi women attracting men

and women, therefore offering more sexual tension to the shows.

Steven D Wright, former Channel 4 commissioner for factual entertainment, told me: "It always seems that the buxom beauty with the blonde hair and big tits will claim they are bisexual, too, as it adds a layer of intrigue. It's an easy box to tick and, sadly, too many people seem to have done it just to get on screen. Almost none of these 'bi girls' ever show any sign of sexual leanings [towards women] and even if they do, they never get off with any of the other girls on the show."

He concedes that nowadays such cynical casting has run its course and that the contestants are not up to speed. He says: "I remember when I was casting *Ex On The Beach* for MTV a few years ago and after trawling through so many narcissists and fame-hungry wannabees, was delighted by a young woman from Birmingham who seemed to have all the right attributes. [She] then suddenly added, 'Oh and I am bisexual...' at the end of her face-to-face interview. Fortunately, the MTV commissioner was more tuned in to the situation and rejected her as a fake, who was 'just using the glamour of bisexuality to get on the show'."

So, if broadcasters have wised up to the ploys of fake contestants, what about the genuine LGBT participants? How were they represented in the early days of non-scripted programming?

Fenton Bailey, the co-founder of transatlantic World Of Wonder Productions, which produces RuPaul's *Drag Race* and a copious number of LGBT documentaries and format shows, tells me: "Initially, LGBT characters on shows were like curios and conversation pieces, but like a good dinner guest they finally made themselves entertaining and what had seemed possibly transgressive became a vital ingredient. Bread needs yeast to rise. Reality shows needed us to make them taste delicious." A brilliant metaphor, but how is it these days for LGBT representation on non-scripted shows?

"The continued inclusion of LGBT characters in reality programming has helped the audience get to know gay people and in turn realise that they may not be so heinous," Bailey suggests.

I can see how this acceptance has manifested itself in lifestyle program-

ming, like fashion, property and cookery shows, where lesbian and bi women are featured in the same way as the heterosexual cast. But are we so normalised that our visibility is now compromised? Have we blended in so efficiently that we have lost our uniqueness?

BAFTA-winning producer Fi Cotter Craig was cast as a participant on the women's version of *The Island With Bear Grylls*. She tells me: "I had assumed that being gay was one of the reasons they wanted me. Being old, posh and totes hilaire being the other three. In my backstory I talked openly about being gay but for reasons I don't understand, it was never aired. I felt that the producers missed an interesting storyline by ignoring my sexuality."

Programmes like *The Island With Bear Grylls* have been accused of replacing the traditional character-driven narrative documentary. Between 2000 and 2005, I produced a quartet of lesbian-themed documentaries for Channel 5 and Sky One. Their titles – *Lesbians Behaving Badly*, *Lesbians Go Mad On Lesbos*, *Lesbians Olé* and *LA Power Lesbians* – give a clue to their hedonistic themes (I did attempt a follow up, *Lesbians On The Piste*, but just like white men can't play basketball, it seems that lesbians can't ski).

The viewing figures for these programmes, which were amongst the highest-rating documentaries on both channels, showed that there was an appetite for programmes about lesbian lifestyles that weren't issue-driven. That is not to say that we didn't deal with the issues, surreptitiously, within the storylines; for example, the *Lesbos* programme featured the failed attempt by the *Lesbos* authorities to ban lesbian holidays on the island.

I admit to being very envious of Showtime's *The Real L Word*, which used the template of its fictional sister to follow the trials and tribulations (or the "hookups, breakups, lies and betrayal", as their show's official website promises) of a group of LA- and New York-based lesbians. How did it feel to be seen as representatives of such a diverse community? Partners Nikki Weiss and Jill Sloane-Gildstein were married in the first season and although they are happy to have forged friendships with the women they met through the show, Nikki said she doesn't think she

and Jill are "really cut from the reality TV cloth".

"Initially, we participated to change the landscape, to help those struggling to accept themselves, to help parents who were struggling to understand their children, to show a stable and honest relationship," Nikki said. "I know we succeeded just from the lives we've touched and the letters that we still receive from all over the world, and for that alone, we thank *The Real L Word* for sharing a part of our story."

In the UK it is much harder to get lesbian-themed documentaries commissioned these days – there hasn't been one since Channel 5's *Candy Bar Girls* in 2011 – as commissioners feel that LGBT characters should be assimilated into mainstream programming. This can be laudable, if indeed they are genuinely assimilated and not just ignored. I will stop lobbying for lesbian- and bisexual-specific documentaries, when I see an equal representation of us in character-driven and narrative documentaries.

Similarly, shouldn't there be at least one lesbian- and bisexual-specific format show, along the lines of *Queer Eye*, *The Beekman Boys* or *RuPaul's Drag Race*? I asked Fenton Bailey why he thinks this has never happened. He says, "I'm not too sure that lesbianism has ever really been as perceived as quite so outrageous as gay male sexuality... and perhaps it's because [television] is such a male-dominated industry". He explains further, "*Drag Race* is about glitter and swishing about. It is unapologetically transgressive and audiences want to be entertained in fresh and original ways, and this show delivers on that."

Well then, that's the challenge. We need to come up with formats that do for lesbians and bi girls what the brilliant *Drag Race* does for the trans community. We need someone to cast, say, Ms Jack Monroe, to front her own show.

We certainly have a legacy of other lesbian/bi presenters. Clare Balding, Anna Richardson, Alice Arnold, Emma Kennedy, Sandy Toksvig, Mary Portas, Sue Perkins et al are all pretty damn good at their jobs but is it a problem that they are all preceded by their labels? As Steven D Wright remarks, they are there because of their talent, not their sexuality: "Sandy Toksvig's sexuality is the least interesting thing ►

"I talked openly about being gay but it was never aired. The producers missed an interesting storyline by ignoring my sexuality"



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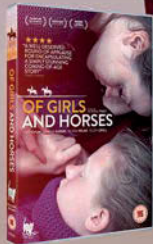
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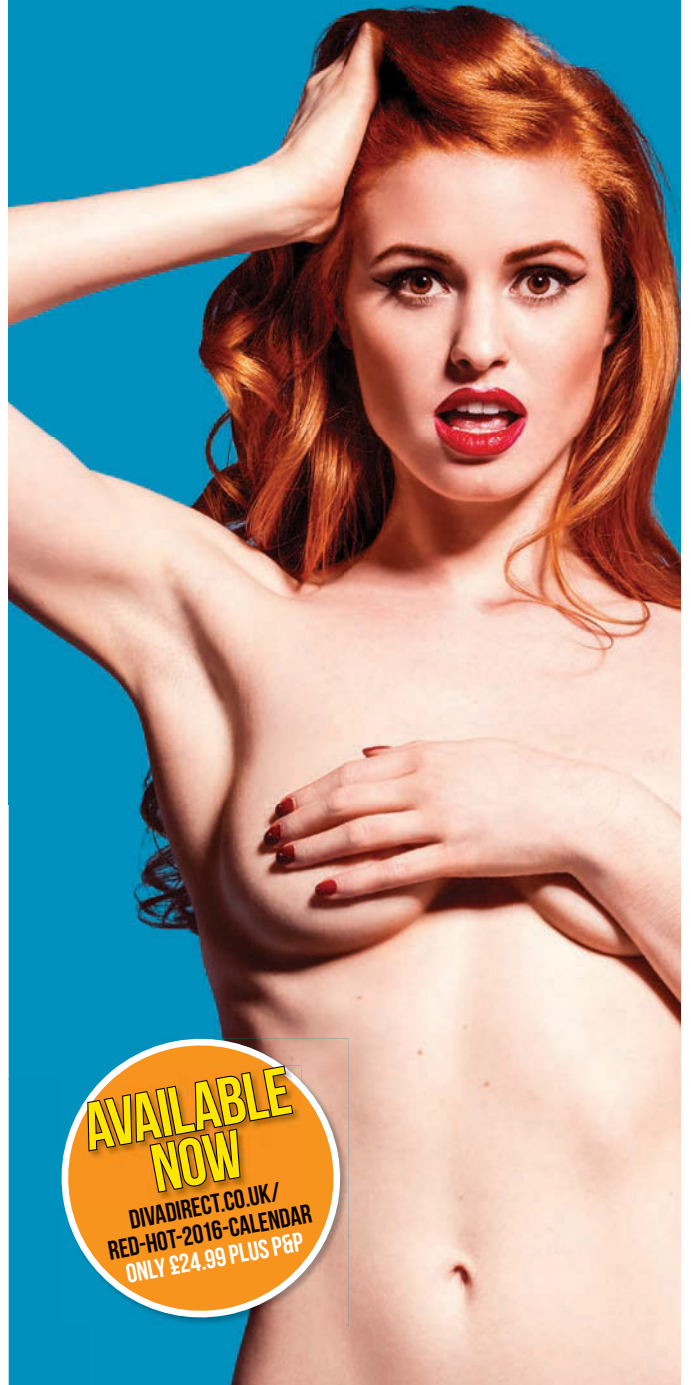


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Saw you on the box (from left)
Sandi Toksvig, Clare Balding
and Emma Kennedy

about her. Her wit, her analysis and worldview is why she is TV gold – not who she might be shagging; and *The Great British Bake Off* – for all its Carry On-style sexual innuendo – is a supremely un-sexual show and Sue Perkins's [sexual preferences] are nothing to do with it."

What about when lesbians and bisexuals appear on celebrity versions of factual entertainment shows? On *Celebrity Big Brother*, which I have to admit is my guilty pleasure, there have been five lesbians and bi women, although the fact that Jodie Marsh is on this list may speak volumes about the sexual authenticity of some contestants. Are they as manipulated as some of their non-celebrity counterparts?

Steve D Wright says not. "Celebrity versions of these shows are a different thing entirely and [rely] less on sexuality – or any type of matchmaking by the hand of the unseen producer, which is always the subtext. Sue Perkins is just a sharp-witted, supercool comedian who has been around the block and knows herself and can therefore do anything and survive – and had no trouble on *Celebrity Big Brother*, if I remember rightly, and made it virtually to the end."

What about celebrity lesbians

"Sandi Toksvig's wit, her analysis and worldview is why she is TV gold, not her sexuality"

and bisexuals on *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here*? Are they there to garner viewing figures, or to genuinely represent a wider range of sexualities? "Perhaps both", says Wright. "Rhona [Cameron], being more out there and therefore perhaps much more vulnerable to the effect of reality television, nevertheless provided us all with a moment of TV gold when she summed up her jungle campmates in a psychological analysis. Poor Tony Blackburn looked terrified of her as she ripped into everyone."

So perhaps they are cast to cause ripples but win affection and applause even when they don't, just like Martina Navratilova did in a later series of *I'm A Celebrity*... As Fi Cotter Craig observes: "Martina amazed everyone by being completely normal and nice and, as a result, came second. She was wry, funny, helpful, intelligent and thoughtful towards the other contestants, she wasn't bitchy – just straightforwardly herself."

Over the last 15 years, I think it is safe to say, we have become more acceptable as presenters and contestants on factual entertainment formats and lifestyle programming. Although it is telling that none of the contestants themselves wanted particularly to talk

about their experiences, preferring instead to concentrate on the post-television personas such as Shabby (*Big Brother 11* and *Candy Bar Girls*), who is now a successful and eclectic tour guide. Perhaps we shouldn't underestimate the pressure of gaining such acceptability.

In terms of documentaries, however, we seem to have disappeared from view. In fact, the only documentaries I have seen featuring lesbian and bisexual women have been on the LGBT film festival circuit, in films that have been independently produced and exhibited by the lesbians and bisexuals themselves. These festivals are valid places to screen documentaries but to a certain extent they are preaching to the converted. As Fi Cotter Craig concludes: "I think there should be more visible lesbians and bi women everywhere and I think TV is a great place to start that revolution. Some people are always going to hate us but, incrementally, the more we are seen as actually being just like everyone else, the greater the general acceptance; and TV is a good place for us to start." **D**

What are you thinking? Email letters@divamag.co.uk or tweet [@DIVAmagazine](https://twitter.com/DIVAmagazine).

Shoot like a girl

Céline Sciamma's third movie, *Girlhood*, earned five-star reviews this year for its portrayal of a teenage girl gang in the projects of Paris. But you might already be familiar with the filmmaker's earlier work: *Tomboy*, in which 10-year-old Laure claims to be a boy after a move to a new town, and *Waterlilies*, in which 15-year-old Marie falls in love with Floriane, the captain of a girls' synchronised swimming team. Young, female, black and disenfranchised, *Girlhood*'s lead character Marieme (Karidja Touré) struggles to stay in control of her own sexuality and destiny, but finds happiness when she makes friends with a group of girls. Céline explains: "It's my first movie with no gay characters, though the relationship between (gang leader) Lady and Marieme is built kind of like a strong sentimental relationship."

DIVA: The movies you make deliberately break cinematic conventions – for example, by showing desire from a female point of view instead of from the perspective of a straight man.

CÉLINE SCIAMMA: It's kind of crazy – representing a woman actually wanting sex, saying it, being in control and loving the body of a partner, is revolutionary. It's cool when you're breaking a convention, and actually getting closer to the truth. Some people might think this French artistic film about the feelings of a young girl should look like a documentary film with shaky camera – should look like you're filming a black girl in a poor neighbourhood – and the fact that the film is colourful, that it is CinemaScope, that everybody looks good and beautiful, the fact that there can be a Rihanna song – this is also breaking a convention.

LUCY PETERS
TALKS FEMALE
REPRESENTATION,
SISTERHOOD AND
QUEER GIRLS
ON FILM
WITH CÉLINE
SCIAMMA

"To show a woman actually wanting sex is an act of revolution"

Your films are full of young girls discovering what interests them sexually. Why is it important for cinema to show this?

I think it's important for cinema to show a strong female character in the centre, so you can watch them grow and hesitate and be full of paradox and contrast... regardless of whether the representation is positive – I'm not into messages. I suffered lack of representation as a queer girl and that's why it's important to have these characters, because fiction really helps you to lead and live your life.

There's a moment in *Girlhood* when another girl asks Marieme to dance at a party, and Marieme seems to get quite close to her...

To me it's the other girl who is "having a moment" because she (Marieme) has this really boyish look, and they've been sharing this life, kind of as a couple, in the same house... And she's living this moment of sisterhood; the sentimental journey of the film is really sisterhood, whether it is with your friends or actually with your sibling. The greatest love stories of teenagehood among girls are actually between girls, even if they are not love stories but friendships – they build you and that's what the movie's about.

You've made this trilogy of coming-of-age stories – what do you think you might do next?

I know I want to work with professional actresses; there will still be a strong female character at the centre but maybe in a different genre – a thriller, or a horror movie...

Your films are full of young, non-professional actresses who give very natural performances. How do you collaborate with them?

Well, it's different with the lead actress and the group; the group is a lot about creating the energy, and talking between takes; it's a more classical way of directing actors. But with Karidja [Touré], with all my main actresses in all my films, I pick them because they can both perform and listen to me – I'm an actress whisperer... With my lead actress I create the scene with my voice – I say ok, smile and now the smile fades away, and now lower your head, and look in the mirror... The key scenes are created like that, like a ballet.

Did you have any anxieties about being a white filmmaker making a film about a group of black girls?

I knew it was something that was gonna be talked about. It's a big responsibility and I never forgot that I was white and middle class during the filming. I never looked at my characters or this world like this was an exotic world – I tried to make a universal coming-of-age story with black actresses; a universal story with a character who is usually at the margin, but whom I put at the centre. Because I'm white, I have the power that the industry gives me to actually do it and I hope that the industry will give that power to more black directors and black screenwriters so that they will get to tell their own stories, and white people's stories also. ①

Girlhood is available on DVD and Blu-ray from 7 September.





**ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT**

More information on p7
divadigital.co.uk

**Top dog: Danielle Cormack as Bea
Smith in Wentworth Prison**

FLOAT LIKE A BUTTERFLY, STING LIKE A BEA

As far as TV characters go, they don't come much more iconic than Bea Smith. Played by Val Lehman in the original *Prisoner* Cell Block H, Bea featured in 400 episodes and was the ultimate Top Dog every other prisoner series tried to replicate. But there's only one that's come close, and that's *Wentworth Prison*'s reincarnation, played masterfully by Danielle Cormack. Though it might never have been, "I was really surprised that they asked me to audition for Bea Smith," she says. "I just felt like I wasn't right for Bea, because I had this preconceived idea in my head of her. I couldn't divorce myself from the idea of Bea Smith in *Prisoner*."

Thankfully, that initial reluctance didn't last long, and Lehman has been vocal in her praise of her Danielle, giving her blessing for the 44-year-old Kiwi actress to carry on her legacy and make Bea her own. "The women that passed on the baton to us were incredibly supportive of *Wentworth*," she says. "They gave us their blessing." Literally, she says, as they watched the first episode at a screening together. "They all sat in the row in front of us and at the end, when the credits rolled, they stood up, turned around and gave us a standing ovation. That was the moment I think they passed the baton, as it were, and we were able to run with it."

And run with it they did. Now on its third season in the UK, and with a fourth coming soon down under, the show has forged its own path and Cormack's performance, in particular, has been outstanding. Did she have a sense

of just how big it was going to be? "A vague hope," she laughs modestly. "You always hope the best for your show. But when it actually happens, it's always a great surprise as well." Why so modest, I wonder, with the awards piling up and the adoration from fans seared across social media? Danielle says it's hard to be objective about the work she does, piling the praise on the writing rather than taking some for herself. "They just give me the lines and I do it," she shrugs.

But it does take one hell of an actor to make Bea's transformation from mild-mannered mother to cold-blooded killer feel honest and three-dimensional. "My job is to look at what's hiding in the shadows," Danielle says. "What are the vulnerabilities of this character? The stuff that might not be what pushes the narrative forward, but help flesh the character out. Yes, she becomes top dog. Yes, she's going to have to enable a more powerful, more aggressive side of herself. But for me, it's enjoying the greyer areas of her psyche."

Like Danielle, *Wentworth* is modest, too. A much quieter success than it's bigger, brasher, Orange-r counterpart, the series is building a solid fanbase without the glitz and glamour of its Netflix rival and has received glowing reviews for its gritty subject matter, dealing with issues many other series might shy away from.

Danielle herself has had some very challenging storylines to take on, not least the death of Bea's daughter. Is it hard to switch off from all of that at the end of the day? "Yes," she says, empathically. "It wasn't until the end of season two, the beginning of season three, that I realised it was having an impact on me. Not in a monumental way, but in a way I'd never experienced

CARRIE LYELL
GOT IN THE
RING WITH
DANIELLE
CORMACK OF
WENTWORTH
PRISON, TO
FIND OUT
WHAT IT'S LIKE
GOING TO TOE-
TO-TOE WITH
THE FREAK,
AND WHY
SHE'S SHIP-
PING FRANKY

before. The subject matter, and some of the storylines that I was part of, they were incredibly taxing emotionally. I did have to employ ways to get out of the low of every day. Just having a moment of mindfulness, really. To be mindful, to meditate on stepping out of it. It did wonders for my emotional health and safety."

Season three, which is currently airing on Channel 5, doesn't show any sign of the drama easing up, with top dog Bea going toe-to-toe with TV's ultimate baddie, Joan "The Freak" Ferguson. What's it like working with Pamela Rabe? "Oh, she's fantastic," Danielle gushes. "She's such a force as an actress. She's remarkable. It was the most brilliant piece of casting." Is she as mean in real life, though? "As a human being, she is so funny, and naughty and bright, and incredibly brave and I think she's done a remarkable job with *The Freak*, which really could be very black and white. In terms of the villain, she plays it so beautifully."

But it's not all murder and misery in *Wentworth*, and the fans on social media aren't the only ones who have noticed the sexual tension between Bea and Franky, played by Nicole Da Silva. Any plans for Bea to go "gay for the stay"? "Can I just say something?" Danielle blurts out. "I stand with everyone who wants to see Bea and Franky together. I have been championing that storyline forever! The writers are probably sick of me knocking on the door and asking, 'Can we just PLEASE, just one scene?'" So, could it happen? "Look, who wouldn't want to get with Franky?" Danielle teases. "Come on. If you have a pulse. Anyone would want to be with Franky." **D**

Wentworth Prison is on Wednesdays on Channel 5. Season three is available on DVD from 12 October.

"I stand
with
everyone
who wants
to see Bea
and Franky
together"

WHERE ARE ALL THE LESBIAN MOVIES?

"Lesbians aren't funny." That's how the director of a gay male comedy responded when asked by an audience member at the BFI a few years ago if he could ever envisage a lesbian version of his movie. Ironically, in the audience for that screening were several very funny lesbians, including writer-actress Guinevere Turner (*Go Fish*, *The L Word*, *American Psycho*) and auteur Anna Margarita Albelo, star and director of lesbian comedy *Who's Afraid of Vagina Wolf*. "I know he was sort of making a joke," said Albelo, "but it's not very funny. It's old. But I knew if I said anything I'd just be 'proving' his point, that lesbians have no sense of humour."

While I don't believe this particular director actually thinks lesbians aren't funny, I do think he was playing to the easy stereotype that lesbian film is serious, worthy and probably involves suicide. This myth of the depressed-lez film continues to thrive, despite the fact that most current lesbian movies are not *The Well Of Loneliness* (though I'd actually love to see that on the big screen...). The problem is that the majority of lesbian films never reach a wide audience. It's hard enough for a female director to get a film about straight women made – women's stories are notoriously considered less important by the predominately male studio executives – add to that a lesbian angle, thus pushing men further out of the picture, and the task of securing funding and distribution becomes a near impossibility. The result is that the depiction of big-screen sapphism which most people have seen in recent years comes filtered through straight male eyes (ie *Blue Is The Warmest Colour*).

LGBTQ organisations like LA-based Outfest are trying to change this depressing trend. Lucy Mukerjee-Brown, movie producer and Outfest's new director of programming, is fuelling the change. "This year, almost 40% of

JOANNA BENECKE, SCREENWRITER AND FORMER DIVA FILM EDITOR, HEADS TO LA TO FIND OUT – AND ENDS UP SURROUNDED BY LGBT LEGENDS

the films screening at the festival are female-driven," she tells me. "We think it's vital to help even the playing field. Often lesbian films, trans film, and films about ethnic minorities won't have the same budget and resources as gay-male films and therefore they might not look as high-end, or feature familiar actors – and this can exclude them from other festivals. We think it's incredibly important to screen these films at Outfest, to let these voices be heard."

Flicking through this year's Outfest programme I'm struck by the number of interesting movies on offer, including several female-made comedies: Jamie Babbit's *Fresno*, starring Natasha Lyonne and Judy Greer; Maureen Bradley's trans pregnancy movie *Two 4 One*; and Michelle Ehlen's laugh-fest *S&M Sally* (which completes the trilogy of films she began with *Butch Jamie*).

I recall the male director's disparaging words about funny lesbians as I step into LA's iconic Hollywood hangout Chateau Marmont on the first day of the Outfest Screenwriting Lab 2015, clutching my lesbian comedy script. Together with four other screenwriters, I have been selected from a couple of hundred script submissions to workshop my draft with five top industry mentors, and listen to legendary LGBT film and TV guest speakers like Patricia Resnick (writer of *Dolly Parton* and *Jane Fonda* feminist

classic *9 To 5*) and Gideon Raff (creator of *Homeland*, and former Scriptwriting Lab fellow). After the intensive lab, each of us fellows will be paired with a director and have scenes from our scripts performed during a rehearsed reading at Outfest, the queen of LGBT film festivals. The lab has produced many success stories over the years, including George Northy's mega-hit *GBF*, but, despite running annually since 1997, it's only this year that a female lab alumna is debuting a feature: Louise Wadley's *All About E*, the story of a Lebanese-Australian DJ struggling to juggle her career, relationships and traditional family life.

I've been accepted to the lab with my script *So Gay*, a teen comedy about warring twin sisters – one a popular queen bee with the perfect jock boyfriend, the other a bullied lesbian outcast – who wake up in a gay world to find that their roles have been reversed. Think *Mean Girls* meets *Freaky Friday* – but with lesbians. I've basically written

Lesbians simply don't turn out to support lesbian film in the way gay male audiences do for gay male movies



the film I longed for as a kid and am thrilled to discover that others seem to like the concept.

This year's mentors are an impressive bunch: Daniel Barnz (director of the Jennifer Aniston hit *Cake*, a black comedy about chronic pain), Don Roos (writer of *Single White Female* and other cult classics), Barry Sandler (legendary screenwriter who's worked with everyone from Ken Russell to Angela Lansbury, and writer of *Making Love*, the first feature film to mainstream gayness), Patrick Tobin (award-winning screenwriter of *Cake*, and an amazing fiction writer – check out his short stories), and the extremely talented Guinevere Turner herself.

Spending time in this nurturing but honest LGBT writing environment where, for once, queer plot lines are embraced rather than erased, I start to feel like it might just be possible to get my lesbian-themed comedy made. However, the reality is that, even within LGBT movie circles, male-gay films are seen as far more "commercial" than their lesbian equivalents. While it's easy (and justified) to rail against the patriarchal film industry, this probably won't change anything. But there are concrete things we, as a lesbian and bisexual audience, can do to help improve the situation, starting with the most obvious action: pay to watch lesbian films.

Almost all the producers and distributors I spoke to during my time as DIVA film editor told me that lesbian audiences simply don't turn out to support lesbian film in the way gay male audiences do for gay male movies. Yet the majority of lesbians I meet complain that there aren't enough lesbian films being made. Did you go and see Stacie Passon's *Concussion*, one of the few lesbian-made movies to secure UK cinematic distribution in 2014? Despite favourable reviews, audience figures were disappointing. While everyone obviously has a perfect right not to go and see a film, it does diminish our claims of being underrepresented if we don't support the directors and producers trying to change this. I'm aware that *Concussion* may not be the lesbian story everyone longs to see, but showing distributors that there is a market for sapphic screenings can open the doors to other lesbian directors who might be aching to tell exactly the stories you want to watch.

My quest to discover why we don't see more lesbian-made lesbian film leads me to the godmother of sapphic cinema: Nicole Conn. As soon as I meet the charming writer-director at a sunny outdoor cafe in LA I admit to being slightly starstruck; here's the woman who, with her first feature, *Claire Of The Moon* (1992), brought the concept of lesbian film to the attention of the world. Over the years she has continued to tell interesting lesbian stories, while giving us some of the most unapologetically sexy scenes in film history (plus, in *Elena Undone*, the longest-ever movie kiss).

Nicole thanks me for being a fan of her work, explaining that she's had a lot of flack over the years from lesbians who don't like her films for one reason or another. Yet her film *A Perfect Ending*, which deals with an older woman's sexual awakening, consistently tops lesbian DVD sales lists, and Nicole has received thousands of letters and emails over the years from women who have gained strength from her films. However, because she has resolutely turned down "straight" projects and focused on telling LGBT stories, Nicole has suffered financially. "There's no money in lesbian film," she says, adding that supporting one's family as an LGBT filmmaker is a struggle. For her latest project, *Nesting Doll*, a lesbian film about political intrigue, disability and love, Nicole looked to crowdfunding in the hope that audiences would contribute upfront to get the movies they want to see made. She secured 104% of her target in two months, proving that we, the audience, really can make or break a movie.

When I ask legendary film producer, director and LGBT activist JD DiSalvatore what DIVA readers can do to help more lesbian movies see the light of day, she suggests we all donate to crowdfunding campaigns. And if anyone reading this happens to be a tech-savvy organiser and passionate cineast, JD has an excellent project for you: a website devoted to gathering all the lesbian movie crowdsourcing projects in one place: "DIVA could team up with *Curve*, *She, Go*, *AfterEllen* and *SheWired* – along with the top LGBT film festivals – to create a landing page for lesbian film crowdfunding campaigns, and encourage people to donate, even just \$10." Wouldn't that be awesome? Over to you... 



Girls on film: (from top) *A Perfect Ending*, *S&M Sally*, *Fresno*, *Claire Of The Moon* and *All About E*

THE DIVA ART AWARD LAUNCHES AT L FEST

Now in its fifth year, L Fest continues to blossom. From one good-sized event back in 2010, The World Of L Fest now runs three international events, the L Fest Foundation and the L Fest Awards. This year saw the addition of the DIVA Art Award and, from five strong competitors, a winner and a runner-up have now been chosen.

First prize undisputedly goes to Jen Orpin for the breathtaking renderings of light and shadow in her oil paintings, *M60 Rain And Shine* (2012) and *Big Trees* (2014). Leonardo da Vinci once wrote that light and shade should blend "without lines or borders in the manner of smoke" and Orpin certainly achieves this in her atmospheric works, each of which captures a fleeting moment in time.

Orpin graduated from Manchester Metropolitan University in 1996 with a degree in Fine Art. She joined Rogue Artist Studios, Manchester, in 1999 and has been painting from her studio there ever since, exhibiting both locally and nationally. Her work has featured in the last three series of BBC1's *Last Tango In Halifax* and both series of Russell T Davies' *Queer As Folk*. A DIVA award, it would seem, is long overdue.

The runner-up award goes to Giselle Louise Ryan for her luscious, bold and vibrant paintings, made using resin on canvas. Her work has been described as "like Georgia O'Keeffe on acid" and there is a seductive, feminine fluidity to it. "The process," she says, "is very intuitive and I roll with what feels right." Before applying the resin, Ryan colours it with various media: oil, acrylic, ink – and sometimes even bodily fluid. With a background in sculpture and ceramics (Melbourne University, Bachelor of Education, Visual Arts, 1994–1998), it is perhaps not surprising that today her two-dimensional work has such a glaze-like finish.

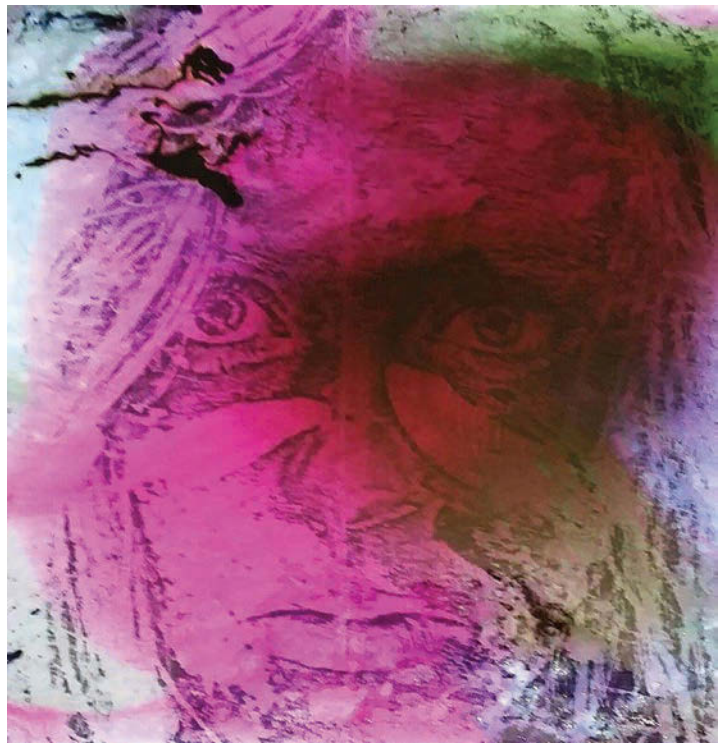
Congratulations to both of our winning artists in the inaugural DIVA Art Award! 🍷

Jen Orpin: [facebook.com/jenorpinpaintings](https://www.facebook.com/jenorpinpaintings)

Jen accepts commissions, including for baby portraits and landscapes.

Giselle Louise Ryan: giselle-louise-ryan.com

ANNA MCNAY
INTRODUCES
THE WINNERS
OF THE FIRST
DIVA ART
AWARDS
AT L FEST



Giselle Louise Ryan, Beth Prior - Portrait.
Resin on canvas, 2015



Jen Orpin, Big Trees.
Oil on canvas, 2014



Happy Holiday, 1999.

Tate / National Galleries of Scotland. © estate of Agnes Martin

"THE BEGINNING, THE MIDDLE AND THE END"

"My paintings have neither objects, nor space, nor time, nor anything – no forms. When you give up the idea of right and wrong, you don't get anything. What you get is rid of everything, freedom from ideas and responsibility."

Agnes Martin was born in 1912, to Scottish Presbyterians, on a homestead in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her early years recalled Little House On The Prairie, living in hardship in an enormous and radically empty landscape. She later denied that this – or, indeed, any biographical element – played a part in her artwork. "Inspiration," she said, "is the beginning, the

**ANNA MCNAY
LOOKS AT
THE WORK
OF THE LATE
CANADIAN
ARTIST AGNES
MARTIN**

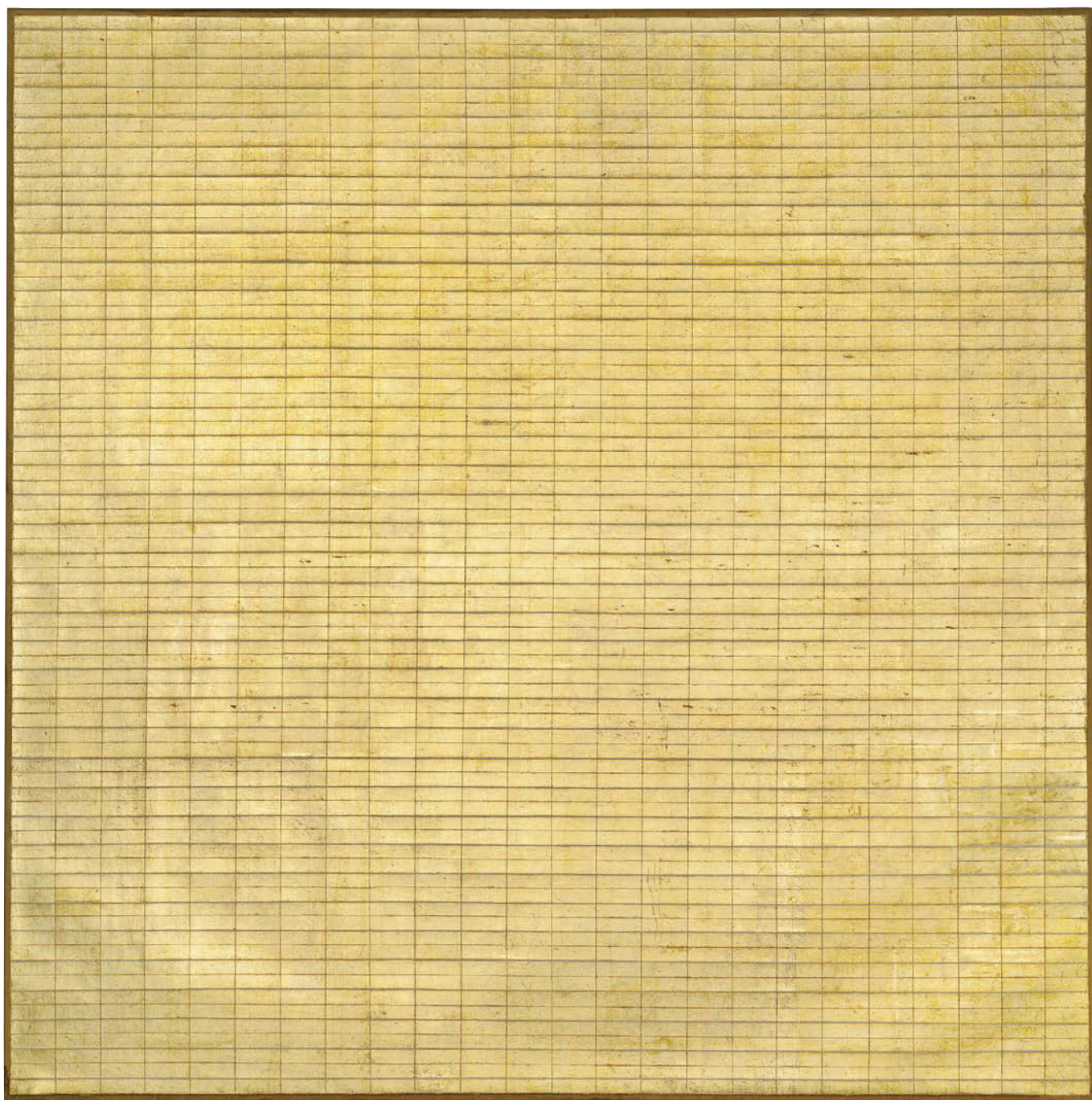
middle and the end." This inspiration would come to her like the immaculate conception, complete, but the size of a postage stamp. She would then scale this up to her imposing six-foot square canvases – a little larger than her body, representing her reach in the world.

Vehemently as Martin rejected autobiography, her schizophrenia clearly had an impact on her work. Her grid-based drawings and paintings might be read as a way of regulating or mediating the noise, but they are neither symptom nor cure of her illness. She was a sophisticated artist and a rigorous self-editor, who destroyed anything not quite up to the mark.

Martin denied being lesbian. She also denied being feminist. Once she even claimed she was not a woman. Nevertheless, she is known to have had romantic relationships with several other female artists and rumours even suggest a liaison with her first dealer, Betty Parsons.

Having lived for many years in the Mexican desert and painted right up to the very end, Martin died in 2004. The current exhibition at Tate Modern offers a chance to experience first-hand the uninhibited freedom she sought to conjure through her work. **D**

Tate Modern, until 11 October. tate.org.uk



Friendship, 1963.

Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2015 Agnes Martin / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

the secret bisexuals

You could forgive people for wanting to keep their bisexuality secret, given the stigma and stereotypes attached to it. Most of the time, the price of secrecy is pretending to be straight. But not all the time. Amongst us lurks a large contingent of folk who do it the other way round. Who knows, perhaps you're one of them? One of the secret bi "lesbians".

As a teen, I was one. When I was growing up in Kent in the 1990s, with vile Section 28 still in place at my very traditional girls' grammar school, the teachers enforced a definite "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" rule with military precision. I was troubled enough without having to hear things like, "You might think you fancy other girls, but it's a phase" in sex ed classes. Yes, she actually said that. I had a girlfriend at school for a bit, but her parents rang the head, who was only too happy to ensure we were kept apart. We couldn't even pass in the corridor without me – as the slightly older party – being swooped down upon.

Anyway, it was a nightmare being the "gay" kid. I wouldn't have known

HOW STIGMA IS KEEPING BI WOMEN TRAPPED IN THE LESBIAN CLOSET

WORDS CHARLOTTE DINGLE

where to start with being the bi kid. My flings with boys were kept strictly under wraps, even though quite ironically I was the first in my class to lose their het virginity (as far as I knew – people did enjoy announcing these things). I especially didn't tell any of my friends at the gay clubs I snuck into underage and tried so hard to find my tribe in. Meanwhile, of course, my gay and bi peers were putting serious overtime into acting straight. Oh the lols.

By the age of 18, I was at university in London and pretty soon after my first trip into Camden I realised that whatever I was, it was ok, and that other people were the same and EMBRACING it. It didn't take me many goth boys in make-up before I came to terms with it all. It just made me sad that it took a venture into this new metropolis for me to feel that way. Even then, a guy told me bisexuals didn't exist on my first trip to the University College London LGBT soc. Lovely. I asked what he thought I was and he said I was a lesbian, but too scared to admit it. Anyone who's tried living as openly bi will know that it is far from

being an easier option. And the horrid irony of him saying it to someone who'd been trying to pass as gay for so long before they got to uni – oh dear.

As we all know – even if we aren't sure how to accept it – human sexuality falls along a large spectrum. I'd hazard that most people really aren't a Kinsey zero or a Kinsey six, much as they might insist they are. So what if the way you identify doesn't match the way you feel inside? What if you're... secretly bi? Take solace in the fact that you are very much not alone. DIVA got hold of some intimate confessions from women grappling with just this issue. Some names have been changed, unsurprisingly.

"My friends would lose it with me, and I'd lose them," sighs Kelly, 24. "Everyone laughs at 'bi-curious' girls. And I join in with them, despite knowing that I fancy men myself. I've been in love with my gay guy best friend for years and we are so close, I sometimes wonder if we feel the same. I've never had the confidence to explore those attractions, simply because of what I've heard on the 'scene'. Who knows,



maybe he's bi too and also scared to say it? If so, how sad that we'll never have a chance at anything because of our mutual fears. I don't know how we would even be able to start anything. It's too strange and I'd be afraid we would lose everyone else."

Lois, 45, has sadly fought those fears for a lot longer than Kelly has. "I did the usual for 'lesbians' my age: got married and then fell for a woman. Trouble is, it wasn't the gender that was the problem with my ex-husband. It was just him that was the problem. I always knew I still liked men but the comfort of being embraced by the lesbian community, something different, that made me hold my tongue. My girlfriend and I broke up a long time ago but I still feel as if I'm obliged to only date women. It's hard knowing that a different decision could cost you a big slice of your social network."

Emily, 34, was really on the frontline with her job in a gay bar in the middle of Manchester. "It was constant," she reveals. "Laughing with the others when 'breeders' and 'tourists' came into the bar but hating myself

for it. I just had to toughen up and not think about it too much. I was a lesbian and that was how it was. In the end I just left and went to work in a 'normal' pub, for less pay, to escape the pressure. I look pretty butch despite having a male partner and identifying as bi to my close friends. I just couldn't be myself at work. Most people really see the world in terms of 'gay' and 'straight' and anything else scares them."

Elsa is 18 and recently found herself questioning her sexuality whilst away with friends. "I went on holiday and did something I never expected," she explains. "I slept with a man and I didn't tell anyone. Now I've done it, I can't get it out of my head. There's nobody I feel I can discuss it with honestly, though. I don't know what my friends would say, even the straight ones. I'm so glad you're writing this and when I saw your forum message it was such a relief to me that someone was talking about this."

The prevalence of biphobia in both the gay and straight communities means that the hinterland between, well, gay and straight is a hard place to

"Most people really see the world in terms of 'gay' and 'straight' - anything else scares them"

navigate. People who are capable of understanding the misery of being a closeted gay seem able to absolve themselves of treating bisexuals with the same contempt with which straight people treat gays. That is so wrong. Straight privilege doesn't exist in the way you might imagine. Even when we walk down the road with the most masculine man, we are still our history and our identity. We have probably been through a lot to feel confident enough to tell people who we are. There is a small and admittedly burgeoning out bi community, which offers brilliant support, but the word "small" still applies. Yet who knows how much of the LGBT population we really make up? Studies suggest it could be as much as half. *Half!* Many of us are activists, many of us have worked hard in our schools, unis and workplaces to increase visibility and open minds. But sadly, like the women in this article, many are too afraid to speak out. **D**

What are you thinking? Email letters@divamag.co.uk or tweet [@divamagazine](https://twitter.com/divamagazine).

GROWING UP AS A GAY EXPAT



My passport states that I am Dutch. The fact that both my parents were born and raised in the Netherlands also proves this part of my identity. I come from the first country ever to legalise gay marriage, one that is widely known for its progressive attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community, and the country that holds an epic Pride every year in its capital. All these factors should make coming out for me easier than for most, but the problem is, I don't feel very Dutch.

When I was seven, my family moved to Shanghai due to my father's work. From here on, I lived in China for eight years, and in Vietnam for two. I lived part of my childhood in these cultures, became a teenager there, developed physically and mentally, halfway across the world from my original Dutch culture. It is because of this upbringing that now, as a semi-closeted 20-year-old, I am constantly undergoing an internal cultural battle about my sexuality.

There were two main obstacles that, looking back now, I realise were in the way of my sexual discovery. The first was the cultures I was calling home. It's a generalisation but Chinese and Vietnamese cultures are not as developed in LGBTQ+ representation as most European cultures. I did not grow up seeing gay couples holding hands publicly, or same-sex families in the playground. Gay Pride was not an event held annually, and LGBTQ+ centres and clubs could not be found easily. In short, I did not really consider that I could be gay, because I didn't ever encounter the possibility. It was as if being gay did not exist, and so I never questioned whether I could be anything other than straight.

The second problem was the international schools I attended. I loved growing up in an international school environment, because everyone around me was from different countries, cultures, and religions. Everyone lived quite happily and peacefully

DUTCH BY BIRTH, ELINE YARA JEANNE GREW UP IN CHINA AND VIETNAM. NOW A STUDENT IN THE UK, SHE CONSIDERS WHY COMING OUT IS SUCH AN ISSUE FOR HER

side-by-side, respecting everyone's different cultural and religious backgrounds. This was a lesson taught at school from an early age; everyone deserves to be treated with the same respect. In this light, you should think that it was an excellent environment to explore my sexuality and come out. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Part of the reason everyone got along so well is because certain topics were avoided, because we knew everyone would think differently, and somewhat controversially, due to their religious and cultural background. This could in turn destroy the harmonious school environment everyone so adamantly wanted to maintain. One of these topics was homosexuality. I can honestly say that I do not remember one teacher ever discussing LGBTQ+ rights at school. I do not remember ever having a conversation with classmates or friends about anything LGBTQ+-related. It was not talked about negatively or positively; it was unspoken.

This achieved a pleasant school environment, but not an inquisitive one. With the topic never broached, I was never triggered to examine my own sexuality at the place I was spending most of my conscious time at: school. As a result, when I came to university in the United Kingdom, my sexuality quickly slapped me in the face. All of a sudden, I was immersed in a culture where gayness and LGBTQ+ issues were talked about openly and fairly often. For me, it was almost a culture shock, and one that exposed important facets of myself that had been kept repressed for years. I very quickly became aware that my romantic and sexual feelings were only ever aimed at girls, and I realised that I would someday have to come out.

Coming out was, and still is, a big issue for me. The blessing of identifying with multiple cultures due to my upbringing has also become a massive hindrance. For years, my mind has been in constant battle with itself.

"You're fine just the way you are," my progressive Dutch upbringing side continually argues. Quickly chiming in, the more conservative cultural backgrounds I identify with always state: "You're not welcome here." For me, it is not enough being accepted by one, some would say my main, culture. I was not, nor will I ever, be satisfied with being accepted only in my own house, by my parents and brother who I know would love me no matter what. I want more. Maybe rather selfishly, I want to feel normal and accepted in all the countries I call home.

The acceptance I crave is much more achievable when I am at university, as I am lucky to be living in a progressive and accepting environment, surrounded by friends and peers who I know, for the most part, couldn't care less that I am gay. But when I go home, which is now Singapore, this acceptance that I want slowly vanishes. While a great country, I feel it is massive steps behind, regarding LGBTQ+ exposure and acceptance. For me, a trip home means a trip back into the closet. Not because of my family, but because of the country I am calling home. The moment I step foot on Singaporean soil, I am reminded that not everyone in this world, not by a long stretch, accepts me for who I am.

I do not like to judge a whole country based on certain aspects of the dominant culture, because I realise that this is in no way fair. I have met and lived with the most kindhearted people everywhere I grew up, many of whom I know would accept my sexuality with open arms. But the views and opinions of the masses in these countries I call home will always intimidate me, and will always be seeded in my mind. These cultures are a big part of me, and in turn, present a massive obstacle in my coming out process. **D**

Eline Yara Jeanne blogs at heartofatraveller.wordpress.com.

I want to feel accepted in all the countries I call home



ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p7
divadigital.co.uk

PHOTOS **CHRISTA HOLKA**
PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT
SUSANNE HAKUBA
HAIR + MAKE-UP **LYDIA WARHURST**
USING **MAC COSMETICS**, **JURLIQUE**
AND **BUMBLE & BUMBLE**
(LYDIA-WARHURST.COM)
STYLIST **JO HENG**
CO-STYLIST **ANDREW YATES**

Rockstar Mum



SHE MIGHT HAVE A
BRAND NEW BABY, BUT
HEATHER PEACE ISN'T
SLOWING DOWN, AS
SHE TELLS CARRIE LYELL

Heather Peace has a
three-month-old baby, but she's showing no
signs of slowing down. When we meet, she's
busy rehearsing for a tour which starts in
September and after a quick coffee with me,
she's rushing off for an appointment with her
new agent to talk about her return to acting. ►

HEATHER WEARS
SHIRT
BY **GAYEON LEE**



Dusty

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“I rehearse downstairs at the house, with Ellie and baby Annie upstairs. I’d just pop up and three hours would be gone”

Not to mention planning her first ever European tour for later in the year and writing new material for an EP. I’m exhausted just thinking about it.

But Heather, a self-confessed workaholic, hasn’t even broken a sweat and seems happier than ever. Parenthood suits her. “It’s been absolutely amazing,” she beams. “It feels really calm.” Super parents? Obviously. But Heather, rather modestly, puts it down to being able to move things around so both she and wife Ellie can be at home.

It’s an experience most new parents will be able to relate to. Worried about missing out on the early weeks of her daughter Annie’s life, and ever the perfectionist, Heather realised she needed more time to prepare for her upcoming tour that was originally due to take place this summer. “I rehearse downstairs at the house, and they’re upstairs,” she says, sipping her coffee. “I’d just pop up and three hours would be gone. It wasn’t so much the ▶

HEATHER WEARS
T-SHIRT
BY SHADE LONDON



HEATHER WEARS
T-SHIRT
BY **ADA + NIK**
TROUSERS
BY **APUJAN**
NECKLACE
BY **LAI JEWELLERY**

“A Lip Service reboot? No way, I’m 40. I could never get naked again!”

being on the road – I don’t mind being away for a couple of nights – it’s the preparation leading up to it. Singing, because it’s such a tiny little muscle, it would be like a 100-metre sprinter just turning up for the race but not having bothered to do anything before. It has to be constant, constant, constant. Building up the strength.”

Was it a hard decision to postpone the tour until autumn? “It was the worst,” Heather admits. “I think a few people were worried about Ellie, but it was absolutely nothing to do with her. She’s totally fine. The fact of the matter was I felt like this was a once in a lifetime opportunity that I was going to miss.”

Back on track now, and with several successful Pride appearances under her belt this summer, she feels more than ready to give the fans a show they deserve and the tour sounds amazing. Says Heather: “I always want new stuff in there – new writing, new well-thought-out covers. And that was what I didn’t have the time to do. I could have just done that show I did in March but I know people come back, so why would you just do the same thing?”

As well as preparing for the tour, Heather is also working on some demos for an EP she’s hoping to release next year. Why not an album, given the success of *The Thin Line*? “It’s so expensive. Obviously you want to get your new material out there, but the way things are changing with Spotify

and music sharing, it’s impossible to go and do 12 tracks in a studio and not lose your house!” she laughs. “I think for a lot of musicians now, four or five tracks is manageable. We can do that and absolutely keep afloat and take some new stuff on the road.”

Has becoming a parent changed the way she writes music? “It’s been hard to think of any dark stuff,” she chuckles. “I don’t feel very dark. There were a few before she was born that people haven’t heard so that’s fine, but yeah, I’m feeling a little bit too light. It’s a bit annoying! I’ve got the utmost respect for people who write to order. The likes of your Burt Bacharachs and Carole Kings. It’s like, how do you do that? Unless they were just tortured all the time,” Heather laughs. “But I don’t think they were.”

So if sad songs are out of the question, what about one or two for Annie? A massive grin crosses Heather’s face – as it does whenever her daughter’s name crops up during our conversation. “I’m in the process of writing one,” she says. “I’m basing it on the idea of Stevie Wonder’s *Isn’t She Lovely* so it’ll be a love song that you could see as being about your partner, but I know it’s about my daughter. That’s the way you do it without making it twee. Without going, ‘I have a daughter! She’s really sweet! And I quite like her nose!’ Because that wouldn’t mean anything to anyone other than me.”

Being a mum seems to have come very naturally to Heather. Were kids

always the plan? “Ellie would have an orphanage if she could,” she laughs. “Me, I always felt like perhaps I wasn’t responsible enough yet.” But just a few months in, and it seems those doubts have been well and truly washed away. “It was such a long journey for myself and Ellie,” says Heather, hinting at heartache along the way. “There’s something about that that makes us so ready. I think we’re doing a good job.”

It’s certainly been a whirlwind 18 months for Peace. As well as the small matter of a baby, she took a break from acting to work on and tour her sophomore album, and as well as sell-out dates across the UK, Heather’s been a familiar face at festivals across the world, including *Ella* in Mallorca last September, and also jettied off down under to present *Sydney Mardi Gras* earlier this year.

While many would now be enjoying a well-deserved rest, Heather is planning her next move which, since you asked, is a return to TV. Could a *Lip Service* reboot be on the cards? She almost chokes on her cappuccino. “No way, I’m 40. I could never get naked again!” she cackles. Not even a catch up with *DS Murray* a few years down the line? “Ten years on when we’re all sitting in massive woolly jumpers? No. It would be great, but I don’t think that’ll ever happen now,” she says, though I barely hear her over the sound of a million lesbian hearts breaking.

Lip Service, which ran for two

“I’d take playing the kick ass woman over the downtrodden wife every time”

seasons on BBC3, left a homosexy void that’s proved tricky to fill. Why is lesbian and bisexual representation on TV still lacking, years since Sam, Lexy, Frankie et al left our lives? “I disagree,” Heather says. “I know everyone was really, really really upset about Last Tango In Halifax, for example, but do you know what’s groundbreaking about that? The central love story was a lesbian love story – we weren’t even told that in the brief of the actual show, it wasn’t advertised as such – and surely that’s where we want to be. I know it was crap that [Kate] got killed off but you just think, my god. The general public, and I know the kind of people who are watching it – my parents live in bloody Halifax – it’s just your average joe in West Yorkshire, going, ‘Oh no, that’s awful. I’m absolutely heartbroken. Those two girls. She’s lost t’love of her life.’”

It’s not just Last Tango. Having lesbian and bisexual storylines in mainstream shows is something we’re seeing more and more of. But we will we ever see the like of shows like *Queer As Folk*, *The L Word* or *Lip Service* again? Does she think there’s still a place for them on the box? “Yeah, I do. Because I think it’s interesting and funny as well. There was a lot of drama on the gay scene in Brighton. You wouldn’t believe half of it!” laughs Heather.

But it seems even though she’s hung up Sam Murray’s badge for good, a return to uniform is not out of the question. “Dream acting role? You’d

want something like *Prime Suspect*, wouldn’t you?” she smiles. “You’d want to be a Helen Mirren-esque kick ass cop. I know it’s a bit stereotypes and typecast but I don’t care. I’d always take playing the kick ass woman over the downtrodden wife every time, every day of the week.”

Does she worry now that she’s a mum, the kinds of roles offered to her might be a bit less kick ass and a bit more kitchen sink? Heather chews on the question for a minute. “Maybe. The age thing is always a tricky one for women in their late 30s, early 40s, because you’re not the young romantic lead and you’re not quite old enough to be the matriarch so they tend to not know what to do with you.”

We adore Heather the musician and Heather the actress, but where is her heart now? “It changes, you see. It’s the Gemini,” she laughs. “What I have missed [about acting] is being part of an ensemble. The music is a very lonely existence. I’ve got my guitarist Michael and my keyboardist Charlotte, but ultimately I’m doing this on my own. Being part of *Waterloo Road*, or *Lip Service*, being part of an ensemble cast – I’ve missed that. Just other people to have a whinge to, you know? Work together on scripts. I’ve really missed it.”

Telly’s missed you too, Heather. **D**

See heatherpeace.com for full tour dates. Check out DIVA’s digital issue to watch an exclusive behind the scenes video of our cover shoot featuring Heather’s track, *In My Arms*.

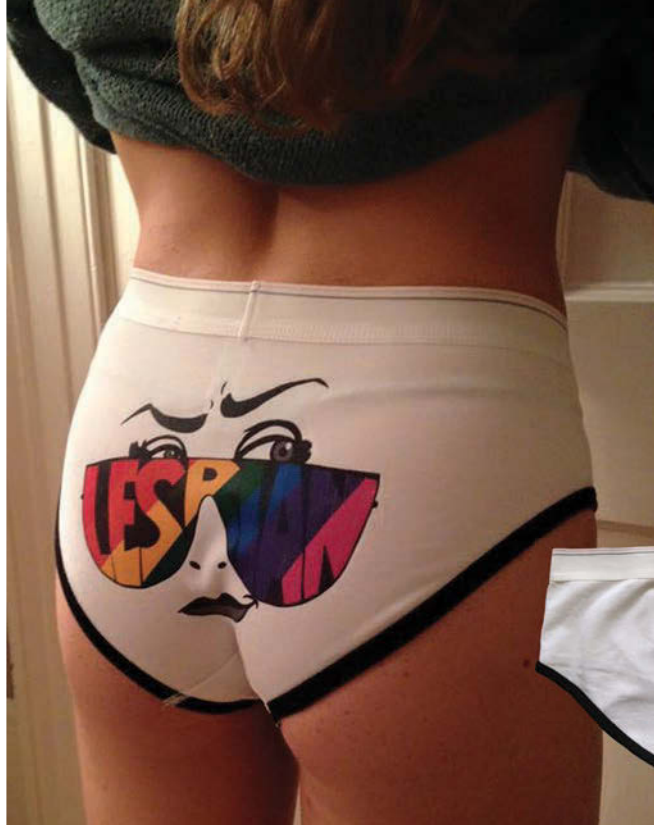
Career highlights

WORDS JOSSIE EVANS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1996 | Heather graces our television screens for the first time as Anne Cullen in <i>Emmerdale</i> . |
| 1998 | Things heat up when Heather appears as fire fighter Sally “Gracie” Fields in London’s <i>Burning</i> . |
| 2005 | It was the Special Air Service before <i>Lip Service</i> , as Heather plays Trooper Becca Gallagher in <i>Ultimate Force</i> . |
| 2006 | Switching uniforms, Heather takes on the role of unlucky in love Fiona Jones in <i>The Chase</i> . |
| 2009 | Heather takes the lead as Captain Mandelson in psychological thriller <i>61 North</i> . |
| 2010 | Wishes are granted to lesbians and bisexuals worldwide when Heather stars as sexy Sam Murray in <i>Lip Service</i> . |
| 2012 | Having delayed her musical career to pursue acting, Heather’s debut jazz album <i>Fairytales</i> is released, followed by a UK tour. |
| 2012 | <i>Waterloo Road</i> treats us to two years of Heather as she plays queer, headstrong new English teacher, Nikki Boston. |
| 2014 | Heather’s second studio album <i>The Thin Line</i> is released. We Can Change, her “big gay anthem” from the album, was used to open the UK’s first rainbow crossing in Brighton. |

HEATHER WEARS
SHIRT
BY **GAYEON LEE**
WAISTCOAT BY
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SLAMSISTER DESIGNS

Printed in Cheltenham on ethically manufactured pants, Slamsister Designs' cute boy-short briefs are funny and sexy, which is quite a lot of bang for your buck, we reckon. Two designs, Lesbian and Kiss, come in three sizes and cost £12.95 each (+ P&P). There are even matching vests. Eye them up at slamsisterdesigns.com.



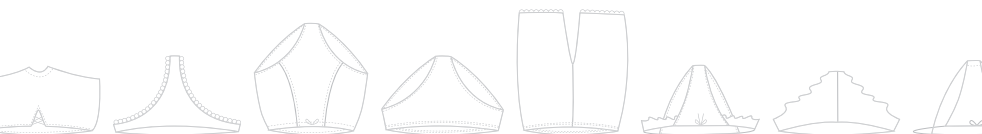
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A perfect pair

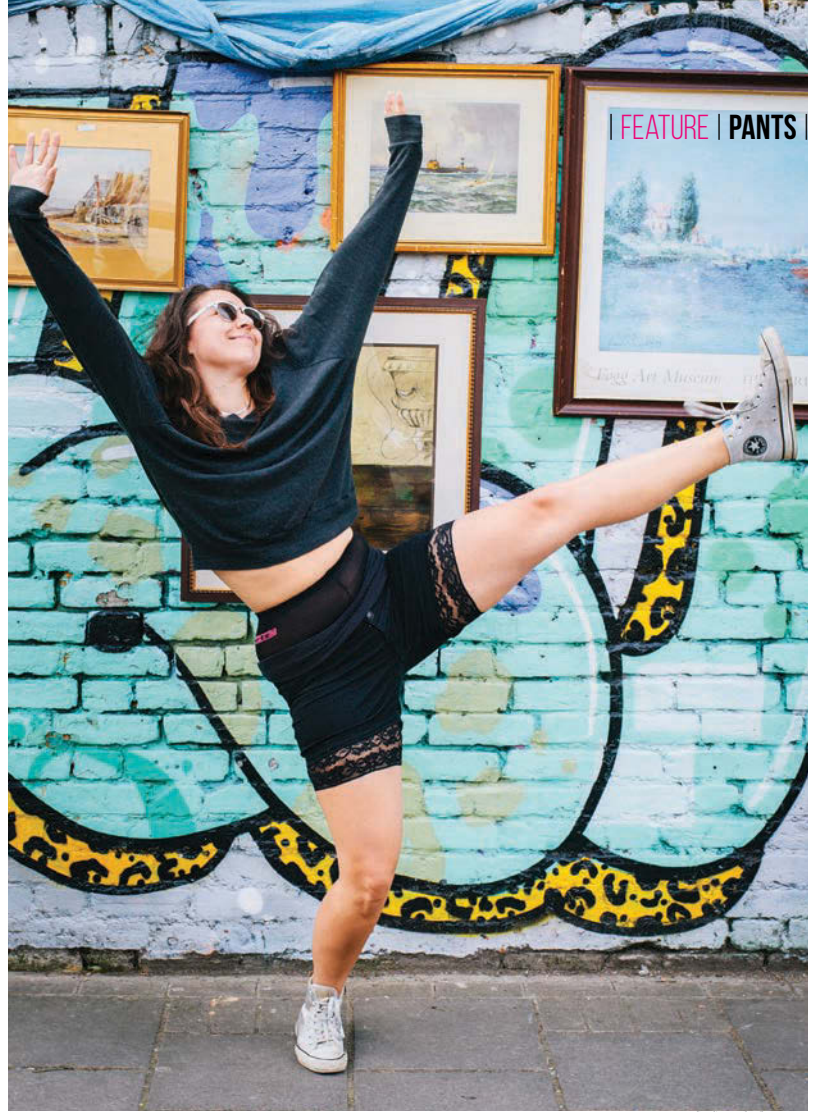
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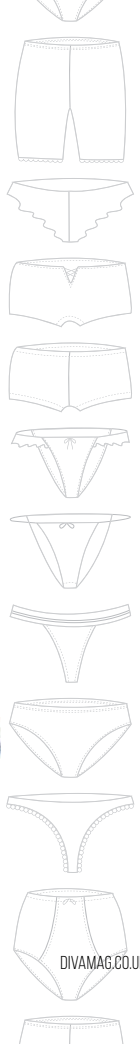
TORTZ

If thigh chafing ruins your summers, there's a solution in the shape of Tortz, an ingenious new form of underwear that works with your regular pants or on their own. Made in the UK, Tortz (£7.50) feature a silicon-backed lace band to keep them from rolling up and come in three sizes, suitable for 8-22. Check 'em out at tortz.co.uk.



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CONTENT

More information on p7
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To L with it: Lucy Spraggan strikes a pose



Dykes 'n their dogs at the dog show

L FEST

WE DIDN'T THINK ORGANISERS COULD TOP LAST YEAR'S BRILLIANT EVENT. WE WERE WRONG

Anyone who's anyone was in Uttoxeter last month for the fourth L Fest and we think it might just have been the best one yet. One thousand, five hundred women from the UK and beyond came together for a really special weekend, and thanks to top acts like Lucy Spraggan, Stooshe and O'Hooley and Tidow they all left with a smile on their face. Our highlights included DIVA's Sex Academy (see p29) and author Veronica Feron's Polari reading, as well as the dog show hosted by improv troupe Short And Girlie, and laughing so hard our ribs hurt at Zoe Lyons, Bethany Black and Lesley Kershaw. L Fest 2016? If this year was anything to go by, we're going to need a bigger field. 

lfest.co.uk



Polari with (from left) Diana Souhami, Paul Burston, VG Lee, Kiki Archer and Veronica Feron



Lara A King hosting the opening night cabaret



Straw bale building workshop with Straw Works Ltd



LBQ visibility in the media hosted by Planet London with Alicya Eyo



Create a Carnival Workshop designing placards for the procession



Ladies of the Midnight Blue, Main Stage



L Fest Games (it looks easier than it is!)



China comes out

Straight gossip columnists, Chinese radio talk shows, the New York Times, queer chatrooms and even the Daily Mail were tingling with excitement last year when Chinese property tycoon Cecil Chao Sze-Tsung offered £40 million to any man who wooed his openly-lesbian daughter, Gigi Chao, into heterosexuality. In a very public exchange of letters in the South China Morning Post, Cecil said: "I don't mind whether he is poor or rich. The important thing is that he is generous and kind-hearted."

He overlooked the fact that Gigi (a "society" belle and a millionaire in her own right) had been in a same-sex relationship for seven years. Replying to her father in the same paper, Gigi cut to the chase, cleverly applying some shrewd PR tactics, stressing her daughterly respect for dad and revealing a principled and reflective woman who really valued true love: "As your daughter, I would want nothing more than to make you happy. But in terms of relationships, your expectations of me and the reality of who I am, are not coherent. My regret is that you have no idea how happy I am with my life, and there are aspects of my life that you don't share. I suppose we don't need each other's approval for our romantic relationships, and I am sure your relationships are really fantastic too... With Sean, a woman... I am comfortable and satisfied with my life and completely at ease with her. I know it's difficult for you to understand how I could feel romantically attracted to a woman; I suppose I can't really explain it either. It just happens, peacefully and gently, and after so many years, we still love each other very much."

Hapless (serial philander, unmarried) dad increased his offer in late 2014, to £80 million, still under the misapprehension that money solves all sexual yearning. Gigi, of course, "won" and stayed in her relationship with French-born Sean, and they all lived happily ever after.

But for those Chinese with less cash to splash, and less clout in the international mediaspheres, life is less spot-lit, and characterised by a series of small gains. Flanked by the much more lesbian-friendly Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Shanghai (where

LGBTQ support groups, social clubs, blogs, film festivals and magazines are all common), Chinese lesbians are finally getting more visibility.

On a national level, in 2005 two major universities – Sun Yat-sen and Fudan – introduced lesbian and gay societies, called "Happy Together". Fudan also offered the intriguingly named "course on homosexuality".

In 2011, the first open, though not legally recognised, lesbian wedding took place (in Guangdong), with over 150 participants. Since then, hundreds of lesbian couples have followed suit, often in mass marriages in parks, to both highlight their situation and throw a damn good party. An internet article suggested that 52% of Chinese people support same-sex marriage. Prominent TV chef and out lesbian So Sze Wong makes millions on a TV show, yelling at incompetent housewives. Tabloids, meanwhile, fawn over her dedication to her actress girlfriend.

Following the tradition of "tank man" in Tiananmen square in 1989, a brave, skinny woman calling herself Dai-Jing ran the entire 22km Beijing marathon in October 2011, carrying a massive rainbow flag and wearing a t-shirt saying in Mandarin: "Shame on homophobia. I am what I am." For the first time, the marathon had a queer and lesbian presence, as leaflets were handed out, flags waved and a bit of opportunistic cruising took place.

Meeting a life partner is an inexact science, but chemistry, lust, a bit of chance and being able to express your sexuality all contribute. In China, however, keeping up appearances, economics and practical considerations play a much greater role in a much more public process. Just as money (or its lack) constricts working-class lesbians, it has allowed others to flourish. In Hong Kong, writer Denise Tse-Shang Tang says that identity matters less than real estate. As one woman told her: "It is harder to come out as a poor person than as a lesbian."

On a hot Sunday morning in Beijing's Temple of Heaven park, near the rose garden, there are hundreds of notes (a few with photos), strewn on the grass. Old women, and fewer older men (parents of eligible women), are poring over what people want from

THEMBI MUTCH MEETS THE WOMEN WHO ARE FLYING THE RAINBOW FLAG IN CHINA

a partner. In Beijing men outnumber women, meaning that most of the notes are from men seeking a desirable wife. Mingling amongst this curiously sedate group, are members of Beijing's LGBTQ community, gently suggesting to the parents that some of their kids might be "tongzhi" – lesbian or gay.

Tongzhi is one of those fabulous terms that has multiple meanings: literally it translates as "same will" but also means "comrade", and as slang it referring to homosexuals. The term was first used in Imperial China to refer to people with the same ethics or ideals, and is a gender-neutral and respectful way of bypassing China's draconian (1957) homosexuality laws, which also forbid hooliganism.

Wen-Di, a student, who identifies as a "T" or butch, says: "Sham marriages offer tongzhi a middle ground: by marrying each other, gay men and lesbian women can superficially fulfill the requirement of heterosexual marriage, yet still pursue their homosexual relationships. You have to get married, [not to] is just not an option." Today,



Eileen Cheng runs The Pub, a lesbian-friendly cafe in Chengdu – considered the San Francisco of China for its visible gay scene

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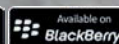
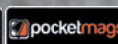
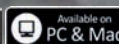
BONUS DIGITAL CONTENT IN THIS ISSUE:

THIS MONTH WE HAVE A HILARIOUS NUMBER, NAVY NICKS, FROM THE LESBIAN-FRIENDLY MUSICAL CRUSH, THE DARKLY BEAUTIFUL TRAILER FOR SERIES 3 OF GRIPPING TV DRAMA WENTWORTH PRISON, EXCLUSIVE BEHIND-THE-SCENES SHOTS AND VIDEO FROM DIVA'S COVER SHOOT PLUS HEATHER'S NEW TRACK, IN MY ARMS (KALEIDOSCOPE RECORDS LTD), AND VIDEOS OF LESBIAN AUTHORS (DIANA SOUHAM, KIKI ARCHER, VERONICA FEARON AND VG LEE) WHO SPOKE AT L FEST'S LITERARY SALON, POLARI.

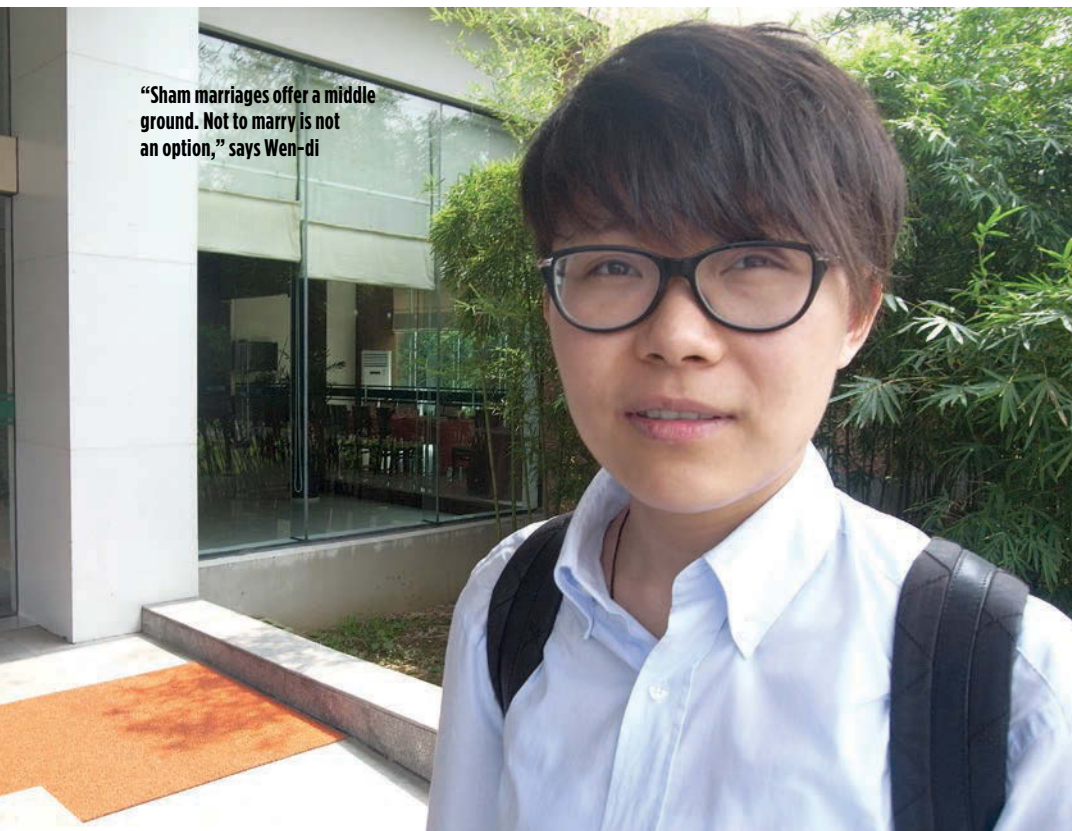


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"Sham marriages offer a middle ground. Not to marry is not an option," says Wen-di



sham marriage sites that unite gay men and lesbians are common, showing that, as in many things Chinese, there's a big disconnect between what the law says, and what people do. Wen-Di, prefers dating outside China, where things are a bit more flexible.

To find a good match, tongzhi sites like ChinaGayLes.com list information about their location, employment and/or financial situation, same-sex relationship status (whether they are already in a long-term relationship) and whether they are looking to have a child.

When it comes to same-sex dating, a political culture of order and regulation pervades: Chinese lesbians seem to be bound by bureaucracy and definitions. When you are a lesbian here, you need to choose whether you are a T (butch) or P (femme). Ps are in high demand in China, and local culture holds that Ts cater to their P's every whim. A local blog, satirically advising younger women on what is expected, says: "The Ts dress like boys, have short hair, hold their gf's hair while they puke, rub their necks, get jealous

"China is changing very fast. We are exposed to the whole world and we are hungry to learn and to experience"

and territorial... Ts bind their breasts whilst the Ps have loong hair [and] long nails. Ps have impractical shoes, clothes, giggles... the usual mei mei BS. So Ts and Ps walk hand in hand... and give each other little pecks... and the Ps blow up their cheeks when they get angry, and turn their back on the Ts, who then have to sort of grovel like a dog that did something wrong..."

Bu-feng is a more fluid identity, for those who are not especially femme or butch, and even more specifically, there's 不分偏P and 不分偏T, which mean slightly femme and slightly butch respectively.

Professor Lucetta Kam, of Shantou University says: "Identities, or more specifically gender identities, in the lesbian community are developing fast and becoming increasingly diverse, creative and interesting. The institution of marriage (heterosexual) in China is so firmly held that it is not really an option but an obligation. While gays and lesbians in Hong Kong are fighting against anti-gay religious groups, in China's mainland they're busy struggling for a place in their own

families. Parents seem to be the major source of stress."

Wen-Di concurs. "The actual mechanics of a relationship are what's hard, as most of us live in small apartments that offer no privacy, and we live with our families. Finding the time to travel after work, the private time, and time to nourish a relationship, without the prying family asking questions... these are what is difficult."

Li-An, who is from a very wealthy family, eventually ran away after her father imprisoned her for two years, and she tried suicide. She now lives in Cheng-Du, which is rapidly becoming known as the San Francisco of China, with its trendy coffee lounges, whiskey bars, jazz joints and a visible gay scene. "China is changing very, very fast," says Li-An. "At first I identified as a 'P' when I dated Chinese; I enjoyed being a brat! But now, with more exposure, I realise this is too limiting for me. We are exposed to the whole world, we are not scared of the party here in China and we are hungry to learn and to experience."

"The Chinese public look at lesbian relationships as more spiritual," says gay film director Stanley Kwan. To illustrate, he points to the Chinese opera Lianxiang Ban ("A Romance: Two Belles in Love"), a stylised 17th century production that tells the story of two women enchanted by each other's "fragrance, literary skills and elegance". They fall in love, cross-dress and marry the same man so they can continue their relationship, which is clearly sexual. A production in Beijing five years ago was a sell-out; the highly stylised, coded performance speaking to sensibilities that resonate deep in China: an almost fetishized relationship with marriage, family life and love, and an elevation of female sexuality.

The show's poster, showing two women gazing at each other obliquely in full theatrical slap, was all over the Beijing subway system: a major milestone in a country where censors had systematically come down hard on such obvious lesbian imagery. In local press at the time, Xian, founder of Beijing lesbian support group Common Language, said, "It's amazing it's being shown, but it's more amazing to see that the play's advertisement is clear about the lesbian love. I hope it is a sign of more openness and acceptance from the Chinese public." 



SCARLET
WINTERBERG
FINDS JAPAN'S
CAPITAL CITY
FULL OF CON-
TRADICTIONS

Japan is full of contradictions. On the one hand it's a taboo to get divorced or talk about your love-life, but, on the other, gender-bending theatre has been practised for centuries. Typical "kabuki" shows star men dressed up as women, but there is also a famous, all-girl company called Takarazuka Revue that sees the troupe playing both female and (very hot) male roles. (Visit kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english to book.)

Having lived in Japan 10 years ago, I know how conservative local people can be, though the younger generation seems to be finding ever-more surprising ways to challenge traditional expectations – be it dressing up as Hello Kitty, queuing for two hours outside their favourite Hawaiian cafe Eggs N Things (just because it's fun) or having Western-style white weddings.

In autumn 2012, the first women-only "masturbation bar" opened in Tokyo. Located somewhere in neon-mad Shibuya, Love Joule was regarded as less a place to get off in public, more a sex toy-themed hangout designed to allow girls to talk openly about pleasuring themselves. Despite my best efforts, however, I couldn't find it... Alas, that pleasurable bar may have come and gone (pun intended), but don't be too disappointed: liberation is arriving in other forms as well, with entertainment district Shibuya continuing to lead the way. In March, this "special ward" (Tokyo has 23 such municipalities) became the first to recognise same-sex marriage. Sadly, certificates issued to couples are still not legally binding, but it's a step in the right direction for those who are still often subject to discrimination from homophobic landlords, local businesses or staff at hospitals who don't extend to them the same visiting rights as heterosexuals.

When I arrived in spring, cherry blossom was falling in abundance all over the city, like celebratory confetti. Despite the fact that Westerners are fairly few and far between out here, my girlfriend and I had no problem walking around arm in arm, taking selfies in Ueno park to post to Instagram (along with all the pretty ladies dressed up in kimonos), or strolling through the Imperial Palace gardens. At this time of year, the mood is jovial, with groups of families and friends picnicking under the trees, many involving themselves in Tokyo's newest foodie

KARAOKE, KIMONOS AND KABUKI IN TOKYO

trend: calling for a pizza delivery via a GPS-enabled app.

In terms of accommodation, there's the avant garde – you can book the first night or two of your holiday (or honeymoon) in Tokyo's first Godzilla-themed suite at the hotel Gracery (gracery.com), which opened in April and promises "a good view of GODZILLA HEAD". For something cheap and cheeky, however, sneak into a "love hotel" in Shibuya or Kabukicho, where you can find erotic-fantasyland rooms to rent by the hour and discrete receptionists hidden behind a glass panel (hotel-atlas.jp).

At the other end of the scale, there is the unfailingly gorgeous Park Hyatt, where Scarlett Johansson's character from *Lost in Translation* lounged around on a king-size bed in a pair of peach-coloured pants. If you can't afford a room, go for a drink at the 52nd-floor New York Bar, also featured in the movie, for stunning views of the night skyline and the wafting serenade of live jazz. The Andaz Tokyo Toranamon Hills, new in June 2014, is also up there in the luxury stakes – stylish rooms feature brass telescopes, free minibars and your very own yukata robes – and there is also a sky-high rooftop terrace for drinks (tokyo.andaz.hyatt.com).

Before you head to bed, however, remember that no night out in Tokyo is complete without a raucous session of karaoke – and there are dozens of outlets such as Big Echo and Karaoke Kan in tower blocks all over the city. We went with a group of Japanese friends and proceeded to get through a significant number of frosty tankards of Asahi lager, while singing punk classics such as God Save The Queen.

If you're in Shinjuku, your next stop has to be the secret backstreets of Golden Gai. Here, you will find dimly lit alleys lined with tiny speakeasies, each seating no more than about eight people, in ramshackle old Japanese houses. All the bars are amazing (although they often make you pay a cover charge) but my favourites were Bardot, for sophisticated vin rouge and French love songs, and Death Match In Hell, which is decorated in horror film memorabilia.

Apart from the odd Western dining chain, food in Japan is authentic – high quality, good value and beautiful to look at. For the freshest sushi and sashimi, head to the lanes around

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Japan National
Tourism
Organisation:
jnto.go.jp

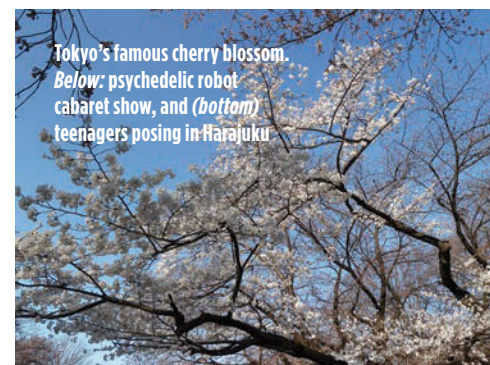
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Tours:
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Tsukiji fish market at 9am to find dozens of stalls and counters dishing up fruits of the sea straight from the boat. (The market itself is a vast wholesale enterprise that is not for the fainthearted.) If, like me, you are vegan/vegetarian, then the Brown Rice Canteen from Neal's Yard in Shibuya does a delicious menu of healthy meat- and fish-free Japanese dishes.

After a bite, take the subway to Harajuku, where you can begin by taking a stroll through the peaceful forests of Yoyogi park and its pretty iris gardens. At its heart is the magnificent Meiji Jingu shrine – perform the hand-washing ritual before entering, and then throw a coin at the threshold before clapping and bowing. It's for good fortune. Next, head into Harajuku's thronging Takeshita shopping street to buy clothes for dogs, and then cross the main road into the more chilled out part of the neighbourhood, which is full of quirky vintage stores, independent boutiques, trainer shops and designer outlets.

Saving the best for last, my girlfriend and I spent our final evening in Tokyo in the depths of gaudy Kabukicho, at an underground, psychedelic robot cabaret show (shinjuku-robot.com). The waiting room had gold snail-shell thrones to sit on and, downstairs, the spectacle unfolded with giant fembots battling smoke-breathing snakes, and scantily clad science-fiction cheerleaders dancing to pounding electronica. Pretty much the campest thing I have ever seen – I think Tokyo is my spiritual home. ☺

In the dimly lit alleys of Golden Gai tiny speakeasies seat no more than eight people in ramshackle old Japanese houses



Tokyo's famous cherry blossom. Below: psychedelic robot cabaret show, and (bottom) teenagers posing in Harajuku





5 MORE LBTQ-FRIENDLY LONDON CLUBS

A hospital room... with a difference

Pretentious, overstated, excessive and cliquey. Isn't that what private members' clubs are about? Well... not exactly. Scratch away the epidermis of elitism and get under the skin of the "sceney" feel at such places and you'll usually find innovation, talent and a huge respect for creativity. Nowhere in London have I found this to be more true than at the Hospital Club. Slap bang in the middle of Covent Garden, here you can sit drinking beetroot and carrot juice surrounded by tech and fashion start-ups (on their Macbooks) in the morning, languish over a long lunch with friends and then attend a gig or screening early evening – all without leaving the premises.

And now you need never make the journey home, because in January the Hospital Club opened its luxury boutique bedroom extension. Naturally, the wife and I (both members) decided to test-run one of the suites. Quite unusually, our tastes were aligned: we were both mightily impressed. Yes, we loved the HD television, cavernous bed, room service, high-end bathroom products and funky chaise. But the real magic of our room, and the others we got to spy on, was more indistinct – about hitting a sweet spot of influences, styles and attitudes and creating a calm yet inspiring vibe. Not only was there everything a creative could want to sustain themselves through an inspired fever of productivity (space, quiet, colour, beauty, artwork, pens

LUCY FRY
TESTS OUT
THE NEW
BEDROOMS AT
A CLUB WHERE
YOU DON'T
HAVE TO BE
A MEMBER
TO STAY

and, of course, Nespresso), but there was also anything a hedonist could need too (mini bar, thick walls, a balcony and that chaise again...).

If you're lucky enough to stay in November you can also enjoy the club's annual Sustainability Week, which welcomes leaders from across the business world to discuss different key topics each day. In 2013, speakers included Celia Gregory (The Marine Foundation), Tamsin Lejeune (The Ethical Fashion Forum) and Sam Roddick (Coco de Mer).

If I had to stick a label (or three) on them, I'd say the Hospital Club rooms are a bit retro-kitsch-cool. It's like the set of Mad Men (season five) meets cosy alpine chalet – with velvet, leather, wood and even stained glass and classic furniture. If that sounds a bit vulgar, it's because it so nearly was, yet somehow the brashness of the colour schemes seems deliberately bawdy, a nod to creative daring, rather than a designer's innovation gone wrong. What's more, there's an element of wonderland, with contemporary details popping up in unexpected corners: brain-power tool-kits by the School of Life (theschooloflife.com), an erotic mini bar by Holloway Smith Noir (hollowaysmithnoir.com) and a cocktail trolley that comes round at 7pm each evening so that suite guests can enjoy a bespoke bartending experience in their room. Not bad for a home away from home. **①**

The Hospital Club bedrooms are available to members (at 20% discount) and non-members. Prices start at £180 per night for a small room and go up to £580 for a suite. thehospitalclub.com

THE LIBRARY CLUB

Only about five minutes' walk from the Hospital Club, and with a similarly outlandish Alice-in-Wonderland design, the Library is less about fashion, art and technology and more about literature, music and food. It has five rooms of differing sizes and luxe ratings!

lib-rary.com

SHOREDITCH HOUSE

An old pub and lodging house in the heart of the East End, Shoreditch House has 26 bedrooms (open to members and non-members) attached to the private members' club with pool, gym and plenty of hipster style.

shoreditchhouse.com

HIGH ROAD HOUSE

One of west London's best kept secrets, High Road House is the sister club of Soho House (and Shoreditch House), located on Chiswick High Road in a Georgian town-house. It's got 14 lovely rooms, including a 215-square-foot playroom. We'll be taking that one, then, thanks...

highroadhouse.co.uk

GROUCHO CLUB

With a name attributed to Groucho Marx's comment that he would never want to be a member of a club that would have him, the Groucho Club, on Soho's Dean Street, is regarded by most people as the original London arts and media private members' club. Groucho is about as gay as its gets (along with Soho House on Old Compton Street, perhaps: sohohouse.com), has just undergone refurbishment, does excellent cocktails and has 20 lovely rooms for members and guests.

thegrouchoclub.com

THE KING'S HEAD

Opened in 2013 in the middle of Dalston, the King's Head couldn't really fail to be cool. It's tucked away underneath a derelict pub and a hidden nightclub. No bedroom though.

thekingshead-london.com

TRAVEL SECRET
DOG SPOT

We don't like discrimination in any form, particularly when it relates to our furry friends. So we're happy to say that holiday company Holiday Cottages recently launched its dedicated microsite, Dog Spot, devoted to making sure our pampered pooches can have the paw-fect getaway at its 1,200 dog-friendly locations around the UK. It features Sage, the Canine Critic (a 12-year-old chocolate labrador) who'll be reviewing her stays, and a Dog Spot app so you can get information wherever you are.

holidaycottages.co.uk/dog-spot

TRAVEL NEWS

'APPY DAYS

Got some iconic cities on your travel hit list this autumn? Consider downloading one of 11 new weather-based city guides onto your smartphone for just 79p. Totally independent and written by resident, expert travel journalists, the guides are updated each quarter and include an insider's top fives for budget, mid-range and luxury options (think: sights, events, shops, restaurants, bars and clubs and hotels). These include colourful details like

favourite items to buy in shops, best tables in restaurants, drinks in bars or rooms in hotels.

seasonalcities.com



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If you want to squeeze the last out of the summer, you could do worse than a sexy Mallorcan break in the luxury Hotel Can Mostatxins (known as Hotel Moustache to us English folk). Set inside the historic walled town of Alcúdia, 30 metres from the main square, Can Mostatxins has just re-opened its doors after a four-year restoration period and now offers nine unique rooms, all in keeping with its 15th century gothic roots.

hotelcanmostatxins.com

ECO CORNER

CAMP CAMPING

Autumn approaches but there's still time for a jaunty camping trip, right? If you're worried about intolerance or discrimination then the Freedom Club could have the answer. A non-profit caravanning and camping club for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender travellers, it hosts UK meets where socialising is encouraged and nobody gets stared at (for the wrong reasons, anyway).

freedomclub.co.uk



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Clare also runs a divine selection of retreats and workshops in the UK and abroad:

- Big Love Boudoir Healing Body Weekend Workshop - Fall in love with your body - Liverpool Sept 2015
- Women Who Run with Wolves Workshops Liverpool & London (Clare trained with Dr Estes author of the book) 2015/16
- Mexico Magic & Miracles (Visit Frida Kahlo House) Nov 2016
- 6 Month Big Love heART School for Wild Women and Sassy Sistas runs one Sunday a month Jan - July 2016
- Day, Weekend Workshops and Girl's/Women's Circles across the UK & in-house tailored events

Contact information:

W: www.clarecampbell.org

E: clarecampbell@me.com

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GROUPS

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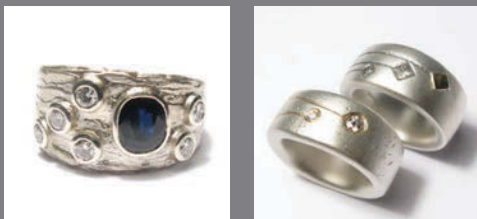
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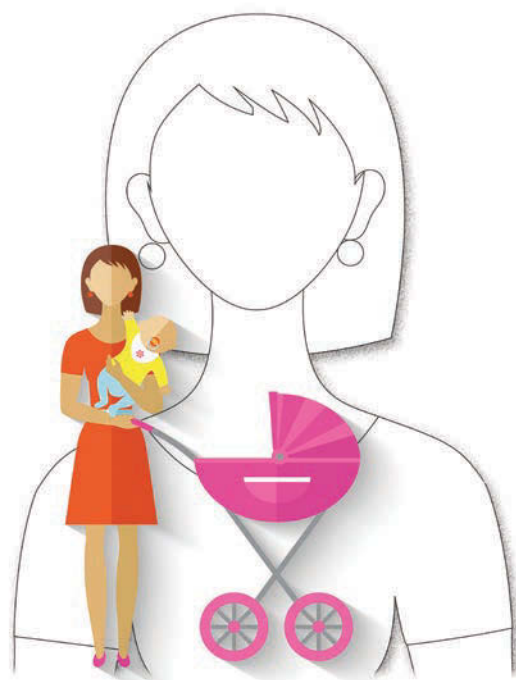


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Could you go it alone?



MANY SINGLE WOMEN ARE CHOOSING TO CONCEIVE, SAYS TRACEY SAINSBURY, SENIOR FERTILITY COUNSELLOR AT THE LONDON WOMEN'S CLINIC

More and more women are choosing not to settle for the wrong relationship in order to try to conceive, and this includes lesbian and bisexual women who opt to embark on fertility treatment as singletons.

However, single women may well be too hard on themselves during treatment. When heterosexual couples undergo fertility treatment at a registered clinic, it is most often after trying to conceive through intercourse for some time. They will have had time to be shocked it didn't work, then accepting that it might take a little while, then angry that it's working for others and sad it's not happening for them. In other words, they allow themselves to feel all sorts of emotions as they process trying to conceive with assistance; when there is a partner of the opposite sex experiencing infertility they allow themselves to grieve. They try to work together but often get it wrong as they process in different ways and sods law dictates they aren't always feeling the same way at the same time.

For single women there is often a sense of needing to be 100% ready, calm, in control of their decisions and positive about treatment – but they still experience a whole range of emotions when treatment becomes a reality as this can represent a loss of fantasy around how they had hoped to conceive.

Even with a firm plan and great support, a single woman can feel quite overwhelmed once treatment becomes a reality. A support network can be great when you're trying to conceive, but when everyone is rooting for you it can bring its own pressures.

It is perfectly normal to experience a whole range of emotions as you progress on a pathway to parenthood; if you're feeling low and a well-meaning friend tells you that you have to stay positive for your treatment to work, you can feel like you're sabotaging your treatment, even though we know stress won't affect the outcome of assisted conception. You can also begin to isolate yourself a little, so having a supportive environment at your chosen clinic is essential.

Having a look at the donor bank catalogues for donor eggs and/or donor sperm can be exciting, but it can also be a fraught time as you hope to make the right decisions. As part of a couple, you share the decisions; on your own, the choices may feel like a lot to handle and some women invite friends to help them decide.

We always advise picking a donor whose physical characteristics are a good match for you and your wider family; if your family is more diverse it means you have a wider choice. Ultimately, we advise a donor you're comfortable with,

the key point being one that's right for you, not necessarily your friends' choice!

We hope that treatment is successful and afterwards there can be a few surprising moments in store for our solo mums. A commonly shared experience is that men who respect you as a person, often someone at work whom you manage or a well-meaning friend or friend-of-a-friend might feel quite hurt that you didn't ask them for sperm, they'd have been happy to help. Their dented ego can take a little while to recover; the envy from some other mums who settled for the wrong relationship can take a little longer.

Many women –straight, gay and bi – do settle for the wrong partner to parent with and, sadly, relationship breakdown with children involved is not at all uncommon. When it happens, there is usually baggage – not just for the single mum by circumstance and her ex-partner but for the child, too.

The mums who juggle their family life with the needs, wants and desires of an ex may be envious of your autonomy; if you have childcare, no one can comment on where you go or with whom. You make the decisions on discipline and school, it's alright for you, your life is easy... apparently.

The research on single mums by choice is consistently positive, contrary to the message often shared in the media about the underachieving children of single parent families. So we are confident when we say that women contemplating solo motherhood aren't being selfish, aren't denying their child a second parent – they are simply determined not to give them the wrong one. **D**

Find out more about fertility options for single women at the London Women's Clinic, londonwomensclinic.com
Contemplating Single Motherhood seminar at the Alternative Parenting Show on 19 September alternativeparenting.co.uk

Research on single mums by choice is consistent and positive

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CHOOSING CELIBACY



Everyone wants to be having sex, right? We all want to be sexually desirable and confident. We all want to be having amazing orgasms. We all want to make out, make love, make whoopee, or whatever else you call it. Don't we?

Despite the huge amount of emphasis that our culture puts on being sexually active, there are many people who are not having sex: some because of circumstance, and some because of an active decision.

There is a definite irony that a woman who is viewed as "too sexual" in our society may be slut-shamed, whilst a woman who chooses not to be sexually active may be shamed in another way: by being called frigid or a prude.

The bottom line is that respecting each individual's sexual decisions and choices is important. Celibacy may or may not be something that you have previously thought about or experienced, and it may or may not be something that comes up for you (or someone you are attracted to/ in relationship with) at some point in the future. Here are just a few reasons why an individual may choose to be celibate.

ASEXUALITY

Asexual people do not feel sexual attraction to other people and, consequently, may choose not to have sex. They may choose to have romantic relationships, they may choose to have physical, tactile relationship/s, they may choose to have a partner (or partners), or they may choose to have only friends and acquaintances. Not all asexual people choose celibacy. Some may choose to have sexual contact with another person – and/or masturbate – for reasons other than sexual attraction. In a nutshell: asexuality is an orientation; celibacy is a choice.

RELIGIOUS REASONS

Perhaps the highest-profile reason for choosing celibacy is because of

IN A SEEMINGLY SEX-CRAZED WORLD, ANNA SANSOM TAKES A LOOK AT THE REASONS WHY WE MIGHT CHOOSE TO ABSTAIN

religious reasons. Sometimes this is experienced as a conflict between the teachings of a religion and the individual's own desires. However, equally, a person's choice to abstain from sex may be just that: a choice. Abstaining from sex, for some, can be a way of redirecting the energy and time that would have gone into sex, into spiritual devotion and service.

TIME OUT

Having an active sex life – whether solo, partnered, or both – can be amazing. It can bring pleasure, intimacy, feelings of love and happiness. However, sometimes sex can feel like a pressure, a place of disagreement, or simply like it is getting in the way of – rather than contributing to – happiness and wellbeing. At times like this, a person might decide to take sex off the table and clear some space to look at what it really going on.

Ideally, within a relationship, this is something that is best discussed rather than withdrawn without explanation. It may be that one partner is experiencing a lot of stress, and pressure to have sex feels like an additional stress and burden. Or maybe one member of the couple has an illness, or has been bereaved, or recently had a baby. Whatever the reason they don't want to have sex, choosing to have a period of celibacy and being willing to explore what's going on, gives them a "time out" to get some clarity, get help if they need it, and then make further decisions. Within a relationship there may need to be some negotiation about what this means for each person. Does it include no masturbation? Will both partners be celibate? Can a non-celibate partner have sexual experiences outside of the relationship? Will there be a review of the celibacy decision or is this a permanent situation? Can both partners live with that?


BREAKING THE CYCLE OF SEX ADDICTION

Addiction to online porn, to masturbating, and to sex with others,

can all be harmful to the person if they are having a negative impact on their health, relationships, and other aspects of life. Going cold turkey and becoming celibate is one route that a person may want to pursue if sex has become a destructive part of their life. This may also include counselling or group support (such as Sex Addicts Anonymous).

OTHER WAYS OF EXPRESSING EROTIC ENERGY

There is a close relationship between sexual energy and other forms of energy: eg creative energy, life force energy. Each person gets to choose how they want to experience and express that energy. Some people may choose to channel it into sex, while others might direct it in a different direction such as into creating art, their work or vocation, being of service to their community, non-sexual relationships, or other physical and emotional pursuits such as running marathons.

Just as there are lots of different ways that people can express their sexual energy erotically, there are also ways that this energy can be transmuted and redirected. In such cases, the person may choose celibacy in order to focus more on other things that bring joy and satisfaction into their lives. As with all of the reasons why a person may choose to be celibate, this is a very personal decision: others may find that their art/work/sport/service is enhanced by being sexual; it always comes down to the individual. 

Anna Sansom writes about sex in DIVA magazine and online at divamag.co.uk every month. What would you like to see her tackle next? Email anna@divamag.co.uk.

ARE YOU A LUBE LOVER?

Anna explains the benefits of personal lubricant and, from a confusing array, helps you choose the right kind for you.

Read now at tinyurl.com/DIVAlube.

Sex can feel like a pressure, like it is getting in the way of happiness and wellbeing



MAYBE MORE

PERFECT DAY WITH YOU

Stylish, fem black F, 43, looking for non-scene F companion. Essex. Box 150999 ☎ DV 150999

SPIRITUAL, SINCERE

F, 38, single mum, likes travel & writing. Seeks F for coffee, chats, possibly intimacy & more. Co. Down. Box 861404 ☎ DV 861404

SINCERE, QUIET

F, 61, GSOH, has two dogs, seeks F for good f/ship & further. Omagh/Co. Tyrone. Box 606622 ☎ DV 606622

SLIM, WITTY

F, 49, blue eyes, attractive, 5'6", genuine, likes theatre, dinner, conversation & sports. WLTm F to laugh & click with. Essex. Box 157818 ☎ DV 157818

RETIRED, PROFESSIONAL

Blonde, blue-eyed F, 60, 5'6", lots of interests & brilliant SOH, WLTm F as companion, friend or for r/ship. Cheshire. Box 245555

FRIENDLY, OUTGOING

F, 66, likes holidays, animals & meals out. Seeks nice F, 65-72, to meet up with & have a chat. Oldham. Box 438505

A GREAT NIGHT OUT

F, 31, enjoys travel, cinema, playing pool & bowling, looking for like-minded F for f/ship. Cardiff/Bridgend. Box 572639

FOOTSTEPS ON THE DANCEFLOOR

F, 57, 5'3", dark hair, likes car boots, reading, holidays & socialising. Seeks F for f/ship, r/ship. Mancs. Box 888408

FUN & FLIRTATION

F, 51, likes gardening, cinema & all the general things. WLTm F to flirt with and get to know a bit better. Mersey/e. Box 785411

QUIET, SINCERE

F, 23, likes a few drinks out, seeks lovely F for fun times & a reason to be. Ayr. Box 357879

MEET, CHAT & HAVE FUN

Genuine, sincere F, 64. WLTm F, 60-65, for fun, outings & possibly more. Leeds. Box 443431 ☎ DV 443431

AFFECTIONATE, CARING

F, 51, seeks genuine, similar F for f/ship & maybe more. Belfast. Box 357756 ☎ DV 357756

HONEST, CARING

Kind, loving F, 62, n/s, likes cinema, theatre, walks, dogs & nature. WLTm F with similar interests, for LTR. Kent. Box 112412 ☎ DV 112412

SOLVENT, BLONDE

F, 50, has her own place, enjoys gardening, looking for F in her late 40s for good times & LTR. W. Yorks. Box 376539

LOVES HAVING A LAUGH

Gay F, 42, loves socialising, seeks F for fun, f/ship & hopefully r/ship. Mancs. Box 588840 ☎ DV 588840

KIND, SENSITIVE

F, 46, likes meals out, cinema, shopping & the seaside. Seeks caring, honest, reliable F for f/ship & r/ship. Essex. Box 609985 ☎ DV 609985

MAYBE MORE

Outgoing F, 35, medium build, loves life, seeking F of any age for fun, maybe more. Lancs/Merseyside. Box 945612 ☎ DV 945612

SINGLE LESBIAN

In her 30s seeks British/Asian or mixed-race single bi/lesbian girlfriend, 19-40. Coventry, B'ham or W. Mids. Box 952234 ☎ DV 952234

ENJOYS LIFE

F, 35, enjoys days out, pubs & clubs. WLTm honest F, any age, for r/ship. Mancs. Box 445432 ☎ DV 445432

BIG & BEAUTIFUL

F, 49, big heart, fun, seeks F to be her soul mate. B'ham. Box 400696

HONEST, FUN

F, 43, likes socialising & lots of laughter. Seeks F for great r/ship. Mancs. Box 741884

FRIENDLY, HONEST

F, 24, student, seeks F for f/ship & intimacy. Cardiff. Box 599721

BI-CURIOS BUXOM

F, 52, size 18, seeks bisexual or curious F, 50-65, for f/ship & fun times. Hull. Box 417395 ☎ DV 417395

GENUINE, FUN

F, 45, seeks F for socialising, laughter & r/ship. Mancs. Box 498200 ☎ DV 498200

THROUGH THE MIST

Attractive F, 52, 5'5", hazel eyes, seeks F for f/ship & r/ship. Glocs. Box 145226

GENUINE, FUN-LOVING

F, 52, likes cinema, nights in & out. Seeks F for fun times & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 523480 ☎ DV 523480

LIFE, LOVE & HAPPINESS

Sincere, loving F, 56, seeks lovely, laid-back, feminine F to share life, love & happiness. Exeter. Box 623594 ☎ DV 623594

MUSIC LOVER

Fun, outgoing F, 41. Seeks F for nights in/out, socialising & cinema. Mancs. Box 291609

SLIM, FEMININE

Bi F, 48, seeks similar F for fun, f/ship & maybe more. Central Mancs. Box 301282 ☎ DV 301282

AFFECTIONATE, CARING, POSITIVE

F, 50s, SOH & integrity, loves countryside, animals. WLTm fem F, 50s, to share love & happiness on life's exciting journey. Surrey. Box 178830

100% GAY

F, 54, seeks solvent, gay F for good laughs & r/ship. Mancs. Box 870496 ☎ DV 870496

AMABLE, HONEST

F, 45, seeks genuine F for good f/ship & r/ship. Slough. Box 188074

ATTRACTIVE, FEMININE

F, 52, but not into dresses & skirts. Seeks similar F, for nice meals & coffee. Glocs. Box 298545

GOOD-LOOKING

Mixed-race F, late 30s, passionate, honest & caring. Seeks feminine, gay F for fun, maybe r/ship. Stoke-on-Trent. Box 196228 ☎ DV 196228

PROFESS, LIFE-LOVING

F, 60s, likes beach walks, golf & photography. Seeks kind, affectionate lady, GSOH, for r/ship. Hants. Box 457627

VERY OUTGOING

F, 55, loves travel & the outdoors. Seeks gentle, feminine F, similar age, for great, loving r/ship. Devon. Box 527387 ☎ DV 527387

LOYAL, THOUGHTFUL

Gay F, 59, smoker, seeks affectionate, feminine gay lady, 45+, for girlfriend, fun & much more. Notts. Box 995264 ☎ DV 995264

SEEKING MS RIGHT

Single, bi F, 57, attractive & full figured. Seeks F, similar age, for fun times. Cotswolds. Box 283751 ☎ DV 283751

LOVELY

F, 27, seeks similar F for f/ship, fun & more. Wrexham. Box 620424

HONEST, SENSUAL

F, 63, 5'8", medium build, seeks similar F for good r/ship. Ldn. Box 584603

HONEST, SINCERE

F, 50s, likes days out, animals & cosy nights in. Seeks feminine, gay F, 40-60s, for fun & hopefully r/ship. Notts. Box 161268 ☎ DV 161268

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY

F, 53, slim build, WLTm F for f/ship, hopefully leading to LTR. W. Yorks. Box 411452

FRIENDLY, KIND

F, 52, 5'5", medium build, seeks similar F for mutual happiness & contentment. Mancs. Box 792911 ☎ DV 792911

EASY-GOING, NICE

F, 45, likes a laugh & socialising. Seeks F for fun & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 789818 ☎ DV 789818

SENSUAL, HONEST

F, 52, medium build, seeks F for good times, maybe more. Soton. Box 499883

GENUINE, FRIENDLY

F, 75, non-drinker, seeks F companion, GSOH, with car, for cinema, good food & more. Devon. Box 828190

HONEST, BISEXUAL

F, 49, 5'4", large build, seeks nice lady for f/ship & maybe more. Powys. Box 807825

ENTIRELY HONEST

F, 55, 5'10", has a dog & cat, likes long walks, a bit disabled, seeks F for good r/ship. Darlington. Box 381150

TEETOTAL, HONEST

F, 72, n/s, likes holidays, socialising & conversation. Seeks loving, caring F for good r/ship. Lancs. Box 822209

FRIENDLY, PLUMP, PRETTY

Bisexual lady, 61, seeks similar F for fun times. Glocs. Box 237013

OUTGOING, BUBBLY

F, 49, fun, likes nights in/out & socialising. Seeks similar F for great r/ship. Co. Down. Box 657198 ☎ DV 657198

KIND-HEARTED, HONEST

F, 33, 5'8", medium build, likes walks, cinema & nights in. Seeks lovely F for r/ship. Co. Antrim. Box 194316

LOVING, CARING, GAY

F, 52, likes meals out, cinema & walks. Seeks caring, loving F for r/ship. Lancs. Box 745729 ☎ DV 745729

SINCERE, LOVING

F, 62, likes animals, quiet evenings & occasional meals out. Seeks F for loving r/ship. Herts. Box 405562

HONEST, AFFECTIONATE

F, 23, likes walks, films & good wine. Seeks F for good times & r/ship. Glasgow. Box 459448

KIND, CARING

F, 45, likes cats, seeks F for loving r/ship. Stockport Box 442022

AMOROUS, EASY-GOING

F, 48, likes the coast, cinema & animals. Seeks similar F for good r/ship. Glocs. Box 563608

SOCIABLE, SINCERE

F, 36, seeks feminine F, 30-40, for theatre, meals out & close times. Mancs. Box 978625 ☎ DV 978625

CUTE, GENTLE, BUTCH

F, 40, black, shaved head, cuddly build, seeks honest, feminine, loyal gay F for f/ship & maybe r/ship. W. Mids. Box 507405

FEMININE, SINCERE

F, 60, n/s, likes cinema, her dogs & walks. Seeks similar F for f/ship & maybe more. Cornwall. Box 289505 ☎ DV 289505

SINCERE, LOVING

F, 39, seeks feminine F for f/ship & possible r/ship. Notts. Box 736789 ☎ DV 736789

ATTRACTIVE, FEMININE

F, 49, likes the gym, reading & holidays. Seeks feminine lady for good r/ship. Yorks. Box 999700 ☎ DV 999700

SINCERE, GAY

F, 36, seeks gay F for f/ship, nights out, meals out, etc. Rhyl. Box 163669

CUDDLY, BUBBLY

F, 44, 5'7", loving, with big heart. Seeks similar, honest, kind F. W. Mids. Box 874664

HONEST, LOYAL, CARING

F, 62, n/s, large build, enjoys walks, theatre & film. WLTm F, 60+, for a forever r/ship. Kent. Box 704273

SINCERE, HAPPY

F, 50s, likes gardens & travel. Seeks nice F for something intimate. Belfast. Box 372189

NO STRINGS

MUSIC TO MY EARS

F, 35, easy-going, loves life & likes music. WLTm F, local area, for sexy fun & f/ship. Merseyside Box 113991 ☎ DV 113991

GENUINE, FRIENDLY

F, 50, 5'5", likes DIY, cats & cooking. Seeks nice F for fun & f/ship. Ldn. Box 101823 ☎ DV 101823

ATTRACTIVE, BISEXUAL

F, 60s, has a partner, seeks similar, bisexual lady for adult fun & f/ship. N. Surrey/Middx. Box 812077

FEMALES RULE!

F, 22, seeks F for great times. B'ham. Box 556726

LONG BLONDE HAIR

F, 36, genuine, broad-minded, enjoys swimming, music & horse-riding, seeks F for fun times. Suffolk. Box 255518

JUST FRIENDS

HONEST, FRIENDLY

F couple, 46, love music & meals out. Seeks like-minded F friends for nights out in Glasgow. Box 282737 ☎ DV 282737

SINCERE, TRUSTING

F, 48, likes the outdoors & learning Spanish. Seeks Fs for chats & genuine f/ship. Ldn. Box 359170

CONVERSATION & LAUGHS

Sincere F, 44, into food, cinema & drinks. Looking to put a group together of like minded Fs, 35-55, for f/ship. Sheffield. Box 210859 ☎ DV 210859

LIFE BEGINS...

Animal-loving F, 33, seeks friends for socialising, laughter, intelligent conversation & a little bit of mischief. Somerset. Box 757543 ☎ DV 757543

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0330 333 6946

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DIVA editor Jane Czynszelska is a qualified integrative counsellor, registered with the BACP. Jane cannot offer individual responses or answer every single question. Please note that by submitting your question to Jane at edit@divamag.co.uk, (putting "Problems" in the subject title) you are giving your permission for her to use your question as the basis of her next column, and your story will be shared on Facebook for advice from readers. Jane may not be able to tell you that she is using your question, but will try to email you the reply if she does. All questions will be kept anonymous and key details and facts may be changed to protect your identity. You can find out more about Jane's counselling services at shoreditchtherapy.com

PROBLEMS

IF YOU'VE
GOT ISSUES,
WE CAN HELP

HOW CAN I STAND UP TO MY FANTASTIC BUT DEMANDING GIRLFRIEND?

Dear Jane,
I have a fantastic girlfriend who inspires me with all that she does. She's an actress and she's a brainiac, she's an adventurer and the sex is incredible. I'm never bored with her, she teaches me all sorts of things, we share the same political views and many interests.

What bothers me is that she's really demanding and domineering. An example would be that she always has plans to do things, at all times of day and night (I have an admin job at a university and can't be so flexible with my sleep patterns) and when I tell her I can't join her, that I have to sleep, she tells me I'm boring. This really hurts me.

She tells me off like I'm a child about my drinking and occasional drug use (she's 17 years older than me, I'm 24 and I sometimes drop acid). When I tell her how I'm feeling, she just tells me I'm imagining things. Everything would be perfect if she could just be less controlling and she'd listen to me.

Can you give me some advice on how I could change things a bit?

Thanks,
Vexed

Dear Vexed,
I can sense how captivated you are by your partner and yet how parts of the relationship aren't as you'd like them to be. It sounds to me as though you feel that she can't or won't see you for who you are. What I mean by that is that there are certain things you need to do (have a regular sleep pattern, for example) that she doesn't seem to understand are important to you. She may feel she has needs that are so urgent they eclipse the possibility of meeting yours but unless you fancy carrying on playing second fiddle to those needs, it sounds like it's time to set some boundaries.

You don't say whether, when she suggests you do things together in the small hours, you go along with her request or not but if doing so will impact on your ability to function on a daily basis, self care can become difficult. If a relationship is to work equitably – and it sounds like you'd like yours to be – then reciprocity must be in the mix.

The other thing to think about is that there may be certain things we do or are interested in that our partners may not like/approve of/join in with but that doesn't necessarily mean we should stop doing them, unless of course they are harmful. You are the best judge of how and why you want to use drugs and alcohol but I wonder if the reason why her comments about your behaviour feel hurtful is because a part of you senses you may be over-doing it? Sometimes it can be difficult to address personal issues; even more so when other people point things out that we, at least in part, recognise as true.

I imagine it must be hard, too, if she doesn't acknowledge what you tell her about how you're feeling. Telling someone they're "imagining things" can mask an unwillingness to take responsibility for their part in a relationship but your feelings are real and I hope that she acknowledges that in time.

jane

READERS' REPLIES

It sounds challenging but the fact is, you can't change your girlfriend, you can only control your own part in the relationship. Do you tend to talk about it when you're upset? Try talking when you are in a calm state to approach each other on the same level. She may be behaving in a way that affects the relationship but also consider whether you are owning your behaviour? No one reacts well to being called out as The Problem, and you are both involved. I've always found personal development courses to be helpful in managing myself so that I can see my reactions clearly.

Rachel Sparks

Some of us have quite unstructured lives and have more flexibility; it's a pretty cool thing to have. I suppose, in this situation I'd be the late night planner. Firstly, it's not that you're boring, I'm sure you're not and I'm sure your partner understands that your life and her life aren't the same time-wise.

Eden Walker



Zentoy



Zentoy
App



zentoy.com

I am a tech magpie. I see something shiny and I need to have it. This summer I was lusting after a smartwatch. When Pebble announced a new Kickstarter campaign, I was all over it like a rash. I splashed out on a product that had not even been made yet. Pebble have a track record in good smartwatches, and this was the new Pebble Time. It arrived and it went on my wrist. It has not yet come off. If you haven't made the leap, I recommend it, and there are loads of options for smartwatches, both in features and price.

Rhoda Meek is an IT consultant and designer with a social media addiction, a crochet habit, a RaspberryPi and two left feet.

wodieskodie.com
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WHAT'S
YOUR CURRENT
GEEKY OBSESSION?
LET ME KNOW!
GEEK@DIVAMAG.
CO.UK



APPLE WATCH

I don't subscribe to the cult of Apple. I will always be in favour of products I can take a screwdriver to. However, the Apple Watch is looking rather nifty. It's not cheap, but that won't surprise you.

In addition to notifications and apps, this watch makes calls. It listens to dictated texts and sends them as an audio message or transcription and it tracks basic fitness goals. If you and your partner each have one, you can send little loving taps to each other's watch, or send your heartbeat. Bless. There is the basic watch, the Watch Sport, and for those for whom money is no object, the Watch Edition.

apple.com/uk/watch

TECHNOLOGY

RESIDENT GEEK RHODA MEEK CHECKS OUT THE LATEST SMARTWATCHES ON THE MARKET

PEBBLE

Full disclosure: I am in love with this watch. The Pebble is simplicity itself. It sits on my wrist and notifies me of all activity on my phone. If my phone buzzes in my pocket, I only need to glance at my wrist to see the email, text or message. I can see if I am getting a call, and who it is. It tracks my steps and my sleep and wakes me up with a gentle vibration (steady on, ladies!). You can download apps like Evernote, and there is even a compass app. You can change the watch face to suit your mood or outfit, and it is waterproof. The only downside, so far, is that the toughened glass is not up to the amount of outdoor work I do, and it was scratched within a few weeks. Regardless, my Pebble and I are together forever.

You can now order your own at getpebble.com for about \$200. It works with Android and Apple phones.



ANDROID WEAR

The rest of the best smartwatch offerings are generally running Android Wear software. Again, you get your notifications and apps. The Moto 360 (moto360.motorola.com) is round and looks like a classy timepiece on your wrist. It does need to be regularly charged, though. A great choice if you don't fancy wearing the modern equivalent of a Casio. The LG Urbane is also a stunning-looking watch (lg.com/us/smartwatch/urbane). If I didn't think my Pebble would be jealous, I might have one of these for dressy occasions.



OTHER WATCHES ARE AVAILABLE. There are loads out there, Sony and ASUS both make decent watches, and LG has a few in their range. Don't go too cheap though – you do get what you pay for.

It's all
in the
wrist



August /
September

12-27.09

ME O MAYA

Various venues, London

Throughout September the Maya Angelou Film Festival celebrates the life and work of the visionary author, poet, actor, professor, singer, dancer, playwright, director and activist.

blackhistorystudies.com/our-services/maya-angelou-film-festival

D
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28.08

HEY QT

The Wee Red Bar, Edinburgh

Hey QT is a sweaty, dancey, funk party for queers and their pals. Party in a safe space, party with QTS and don't you dare keep it on the QT! Bring buddies and best moves.

facebook.com/heyqtdisco

28-31.08

MAD FOR PRIDE

Citywide venues, Manchester

Manchester Pride at its biggest, bolshiest and most screw you! Texas (uh huh huh) and Danni Minogue are two of the star attractions.

bigweekend.manchesterpride.com

1-9.09

HOLIGAY

Mallorca, Spain

Lesbian festival Ella is as close to the promised land as you can get, this side of Lesbos and that side of Hampstead Heath's ladies' pond. DJs, bands, sports, fashion, activities and lots more!

ellafestival.com

5.09

<3

Hackney Attic, London

Buzzy singles night for honeys in the business of meeting other honeys for friendship + maybe more.

beehayve.co.uk

6.09

VERY SUPERSTITIOUS!

SHE Soho, London

Psychic readings, mediumships, and Tarot cards for the spiritually inclined queer.

tinyurl.com/DIVAPsychicShe

**WHAT'S
HAP-
PENING
WHERE
YOU
ARE?**

Send your listings to

dora@divamag.co.uk

For weekly listings,

visit divamag.co.uk

8.09**AND... POUT!**

Hyde Park Picturehouse, Leeds
Oh, Peccadillo Pictures you always get it so right! Trans issues are explored deftly in the startling and original 52 Tuesdays showing at POUTfest, Peccadillo's very own gay film fest.

poutfest.co.uk

15.09**GIRLPOOL**

Deaf Institute, Manchester
Plucked-up punk rock from Cleo and Harmony (AKA Los Angeles' Girlpool), who write music to make her heart swell. Touring the UK, 23 August-15 September.

girlpoolmusic.com

17.09**ROAST DAY**

RVT, London

A roast, in drag parlance, is to get caught up in some axel-tongued delivery, some devilish shade-throwing, and the trashiest dirty talk on the block. All proceeds of said slanging match go to the Terrence Higgins Trust.

tinyurl.com/DIVARoast

**29.08****GOING SPARE**

The Feminist Library, London
As part of the Feminist Library's 40th anniversary celebrations, the complete collection of Spare Rib (AKA the women's lib bible) will be available to leaf through. Stay for the panel discussion on art, activism and publishing!

tinyurl.com/DIVASpareRib

**25.09****GAL-DEM SUGAR**

PRSC, Bristol

Gal-Dem is a brand-new, out-of-this-world, online, off-topic, on-point magiczine (sic) written by women of colour. If you're in Bristol, join them for this lovely launch do!

tinyurl.com/DIVAGal-Dem

24- 27.09**BIT SQUIFFY**

Citywide, Glasgow

The inaugural SQIFF (Scottish International Queer Film Festival) hits Glaswegian shores this September and we are more than slightly squiffy at the prospect. Support queer film!

sqiff.org

27.09**GIVE PEACE A CHANCE**

Glee Club, Cardiff

Heather Peace, you're little short of amazing. From looking smoking in all clothes to clenching your jaw in a sexy but troubling fashion, you SING and write SONGS too? Stop it. Stop it right now. (Psst! There's more Heather on p62.)

heatherpeace.com

30.09**SHURA**

The Old Market, Brighton

Her what got you all hot under the collar with the girls kissing + smoke machine vid. Sexy vocals over slowed up beats.

facebook.com/shuramusic

**19.09****THE QUEEREST OF THE QUEER**

The Coronet, London

A 12-hour festival devoted to all that is right and all that is queer in the UK now! Think gender politics, think revolutionary outfits, think co-operative partying. Drag, bands and performance to shake up the system to.

tinyurl.com/DIVAQueerestQueer

DIVA

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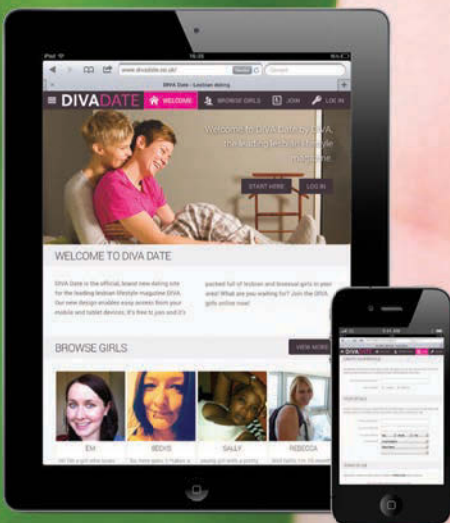
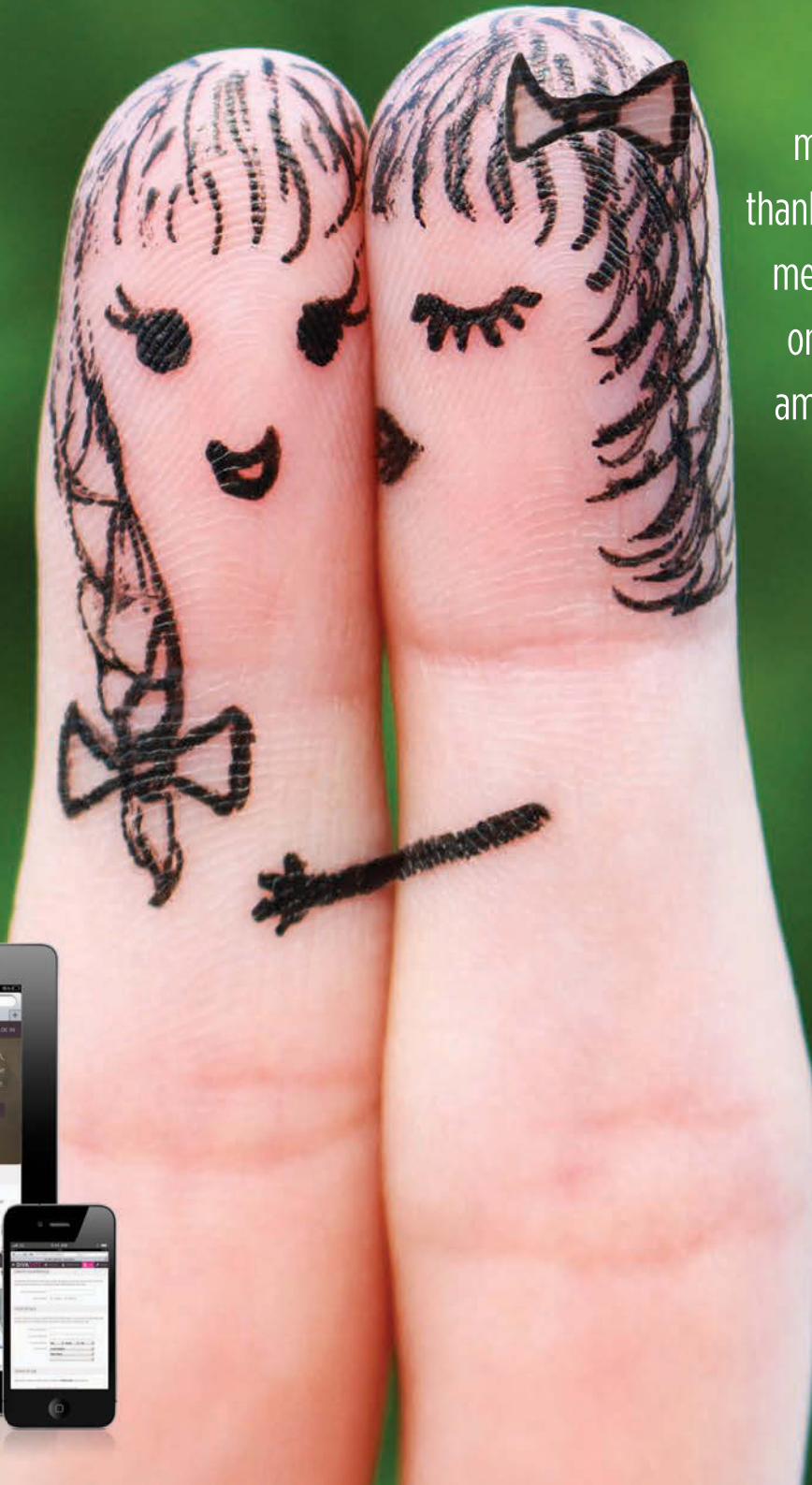
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